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REMARKS

ON THE

REV. LATHAM WAINWRIGHT'S

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

Doctrine, Discipline, and Manners

OF THE

WESLEYAN METHODISTS:

IN FOUR LETTERS,

ADDRESSED TO THE REV. JOSEPH BENSON.

BY JAMES EVERETT.

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REMARKS,

&c. &c.

LETTER I.

"I do not know that it is in any degree true, that the influence of religion is the greatest, where there are the fewest Dissenters."

PALEY'S EVID. Vol. 2. p. 389.

REV. SIR,

THE "Observations" of Mr. Wainewright, which you sent me, have been carefully perused; and it appears to me, in unison with yourself, that several particulars stated by that gentleman demand animadversion and refutation, as militating against some of the most important truths of Christianity. The treatment which an author receives from his opponent, depends in some measure upon himself. Ability, learning, and integrity, will ever command respect; vanity provokes all the keenness of satire; ignorance excites compassion; and it is sometimes necessary to laugh folly out of countenance. The latter, however, should be resorted to but sparingly. Were an innocent smile to be occasionally indulged in the present instance, Mr. W. would be one of the last to censure; since he so ably advocates the cause of *laughter*, as one of the distinguishing privileges of man."*

To trace Mr. W. through every track he has taken, is foreign to my present purpose; or even to follow him, as you will perceive by the first quotation, exactly in the same order.

* Page 157.

It may be proper to classify many of his scattered thoughts, and embody them in separate letters. The first will contain various miscellaneous remarks. Though several minor points will purposely remain unnoticed, it is not to be taken for granted that they are conceded; and you, Sir, who know the basis upon which we build, will be far from concluding them unanswerable.

The ground of attack assumed by Mr. W. is the obstinate adherence of the Methodists to their former system.* He confesses that their doctrines, &c. have been "*frequently and satisfactorily* exposed;" but still, it should seem, that it ought not to deter him from entering his protest, and again refuting their errors. This is an honest confession; and while it proves his way to have been perfectly easy, it evinces to the world that his work was unnecessary. He proceeds with the impression, that he is refuting what has been refuted—that he is accomplishing what has been already effected; in a word, that to shew his prowess, he is trampling upon the slain! What there is so catching in Mr. W.'s manner of writing, to make an old refutation produce a new effect, is a theological problem which has yet to be solved. It is possible, contrary to every thing we may now anticipate, that distant ages, from the same work in *his* hands, may experience different results. With our present light we are inclined to think, that it would have been preferable to have adopted the plan which he so justly recommends in a similar case,† where he shews, that opposition only tends to increase the number of partisans to a sect; whereas, if abandoned to themselves, they would sink into insignificance and contempt. The sequel will demonstrate that Mr. W.'s "Observations" are of a very accommodating cast; and that to build up with the one hand, and pull down with the other, he displays considerable dexterity.

It is with Methodism "*at the present day,*" Mr. W. informs us he has to do:‡ and yet he refers to the Minutes of 1744, and 1745;§ and appeals to the immediate followers

* Preface, p. 8, 9.

† Page 11.

‡ Preface, p. 10.

§ Page 58.

of "the *first* propagators of Methodism."* So careful is he to guard against all mistake, and to impress his readers with his impartiality, that he positively refuses to consult Hampson's Life of Mr. Wesley, and Nightingale's Portraiture of Methodism, "because their testimony has been objected to, as proceeding from personal enemies to the parties in question."† That he, therefore, may hereafter be consulted, no doubt as a friend, "the authorities on which he *principally* relies are Myles's Chronological History of the People called Methodists; Benson's Apology for the Methodists; the Life of the Rev. John Wesley, by Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore; Wesley's Sermons; Hare's Reply to the charges alleged to be contained in Dr. Magee's valuable work on the Atonement; Reasons for Methodism, by Disney Alexander; and the later numbers of the Methodist Magazine down to the present time."‡ Notwithstanding, however, his attention to these works, he is not always correct. He observes that the *first* article in the Magazine "is *always* a biographical sketch of one of their deceased preachers."§ To a person conversant with that work it is well known, that the first article is often devoted to the lives of private characters.

The charity of the Methodists is severely impugned. They are represented as exhibiting themselves as the *only* religious people in the world, and as reprobating all who are out of the pale of their own community.|| A reference to their writings will evince that they are not less charitable than their neighbours; that they can give the right hand of fellowship to the *truly pious* of every Christian denomination. As a testimony that they approve of piety wherever it exists, they have not hesitated to insert in their periodical publication, for the instruction and imitation of their numerous readers, memoirs of Clergymen of the Establishment, Baptists, Calvinists, and Quakers. To enumerate the whole is unnecessary. Take one of each; the venerable Bernard

* Page 74.

† Preface, p. 11.

‡ Preface, p. 10, 11.

§ Page 65.

|| Pages 65, 94, 115.

Christianity ; and its advocates, are ignorant, artful, and enthusiastic. In the midst of all, he takes to the credit of *impartiality*.† It is true, he honours the appellation of Christians;‡ but he destroys the power to which that name is attached. When I am descanting on charity without displaying the result, it reminds me of the efforts of a person intoxicated, endeavouring to impose upon others by the attempt to walk straight. There is no consideration of his, that whatever be his condition, others are sober. There are not many who subscribe to the justice of Mr. W.'s introductory 'Among the numerous follies and inconsistencies of modern religion, there are few more conspicuous than their possession of qualities which do not belong to them, and the confidence with which they endeavour to persuade the world that the character they have assumed is really their own.'

His severe philippic against modern political reformers, || descends into the subject of religious reform, and associates the spirit and proceedings of the Methodists with the two classes, the one hostile to the state, the other to the church. In general, and the Methodists in particular, are

1892, 193.

+ Pages 191, 195.

‡ Preface, p. 7.

Page 1.

|| Pages 1—6.

beheld as united, though distinct in other things, in their opposition to the Establishment.* From both, the clergy meet with nothing but contumely and contempt.† It is not for me to stand forth in vindication of slander, however justly the Dissenters might retort. The fact is, the Methodists, as a body, do not oppose the Church of England as an *Establishment*. They consider it the best in the world; though like cards and theatrical amusements, which, according to Mr. W.'s views, are good things,‡ not exempt from abuse. Do not start appalled, my good Sir; I am not going to justify theatrical amusements: I only wish to profit as I proceed by Mr. W.'s observations. As he contends, when pleading so strenuously the utility of the particulars just specified, that the best things *may* be abused, the Methodists maintain, that the Established Church, though generally speaking a good one, not only *may* be, but actually *has been* abused, by permitting men to assume the priestly office within her walls, whose lives have done her great discredit. Ignorant persons, for want of properly discriminating, may possibly have condemned the Establishment, where they ought only to have censured her abuses; and when the whole weight of their indignation ought to have fallen upon the persons who introduce improper characters to her altar; and upon those characters, for eating her bread without promoting her interests. The Methodists are among some of the best friends of the Establishment. On the Established Church and its abuses, the following will be found to be pretty generally the sentiments of the Methodists. "In religious establishments, vile persons who have no higher motive, may, and do, get into the priest's office, that they may clothe themselves with the wool, and feed themselves with the fat, while they starve the flock. But where there is no law to back the claims of the worthless and the wicked, men of piety and solid merit only can find support; for they must live on the *free-will offerings* of the people. Where religion is established by law, the strictest ecclesiastical

* Preface, p. 7; p. 197.

† Pages 17, 192.

‡ Pages 168, 174.

discipline should be kept up, and all *hireling priests* and *ecclesiastical drones*, should be expelled from the Lord's vineyard. An established religion, where the *foundation* is good, (as in ours,) I consider a great blessing; but it is liable to this continual abuse, which nothing but careful and rigid ecclesiastical discipline can either cure or prevent. If our high priests, our archbishops and bishops, do not their duty, the whole body of the clergy may become corrupt or inefficient. If *they* be faithful, the Establishment will be an honour to the kingdom, and a praise in the earth."*

For a clergyman, like Mr. W. to praise the Established Church, is what will readily be pardoned by the Dissenters, and applauded by its members. Not satisfied, however, with this, Dissenterism must be viewed as destructive of Christianity. Hence, it is affirmed, "A multiplicity of insulated sects, are, as they obviously must be, prejudicial to the interests of the gospel of Christ."† As the Methodists are associated with those sects which are prejudicial to the interests of the gospel, a word or two may be necessary on the subject. Mr. W. can perceive no medium between a man's exertions to aid his own cause, and a design to oppose that of others. Certainly a person may attend to the domestic concerns of his own family, and cultivate his own plot of ground, without troubling his next door neighbour. He may use a different mode of discipline, and may work his ground in a different manner; but while the members of his family conduct themselves with propriety, and he brings his proper proportion of grain to the market, we are not warranted to say, that domestic peace is destroyed, or that the agricultural interests are injured, merely because of a little variation in the government of the one, and of the management of the other. Where the essentials of religion remain unimpaired, the different religious sects are so far useful to the general "interests of the gospel of Christ," as to provoke each other to love and good works. Never, perhaps, was Christianity more aided in this way, than at present. Mr. W.

* Dr. A. Clarke's Notes, 1 Sam. ii. 36.

† Page 8, 9.

is unfortunate enough, and yet prefers the charge against the Methodists, to view the Established Church as the only true Church, and the means employed by her as the only legitimate means to be employed for the diffusion of knowledge. On this subject he will find a diversity of opinion. Let us not quarrel with others because they do not immediately follow our track. Italy, you will recollect, Sir, produced, almost at the same time, three eminent poets, Dante, Petrarch, and Bocaccio. These men received from nature a different direction of genius. To ascend Parnassus, they took three roads so distinct from each other that they reached the summit without ever meeting; and we enjoy their productions at this day, without those of the one being capable of giving an idea of, or of being preferred, or even compared to, the rest. He who entered on the journey last of the three seemed to rise to a less point of elevation than his predecessors; but it is the style in which he excelled that is less elevated. And cannot the different sects ascend, I do not say different eminences, but the *same* mount—the Mount of God, without coming in contact with each other, or at all endangering their individual safety? I do not here include those who deny the most important doctrines of Christianity; though they are not altogether without their use. This is strikingly illustrated by Leslie; “You see multiplicity of sects and divisions,” says he, “which our blessed Saviour foretold should come, for the probation of the elect: as some Canaanites were left in the land to teach the Israelites the use of war, lest by too profound a peace they might grow lazy and stupid, and become an easy prey to their enemies. So might Christianity be lost among us; if we had nothing to do, it would dwindle and decay, and corrupt by degrees, as water stagnates by standing still: but when we are put to contend earnestly for the faith, it quickens our zeal, keeps us upon our guard, trims our lamp, and furbishes the sword of the Spirit, which might otherwise rust in its scabbard. And it gives great opportunity to shew us the wonderful providence and protection of God over his

church, in preserving her against a visibly unequal force. And in this contest, to some this high privilege is granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also suffer for his sake. These go to make up the noble army of martyrs and confessors, for ever triumphant in heaven. Others conquer even here on earth, that God's wonderful doings may be known to the children of men.* Every new sect affords truth an additional conquest; controversies are agitated, and truth flourishes. Southcottarianism was not altogether un instructive, though beneath the dignity of an intelligent controversialist: it served to make us ashamed of our common nature. Had Mr. W. only learned to make the best of what cannot well be avoided in a mixed state of things, his censures would have been less frequent.

While every excellency is associated with the Established Church, not any thing can be beheld in others worthy of unqualified approbation, or even of what is deserving the name of *toleration*. It is granted, Mr. W. observes, "the real friends of our venerable hierarchy cannot feel themselves justified in wishing that it should be invested with coercive powers, or that its weapons of defence should be any other than argument and persuasion."† But this is not without its corrective. He hesitates not to applaud Lord Sidmouth's Bill, to whom his work is respectfully dedicated, and ridicules the "groundless apprehensions" of the Dissenters on the occasion.‡ He even attempts to prove, that *toleration* is not incompatible with *restriction*, and that its "*principles*" would not have been violated by the plan recommended to be carried into effect by his Lordship. Hence it turns out, that *law* is to be converted into "*argument*," *restriction* into "*persuasion*." Though he objects to the fire and the wheel, yet he has no objection, in some other way, to the free exercise of civil power. Thus, as it respects the act of 1812, in favour of Protestant Dissenters, "There are some members of the church," he states, "who conceive

* Short and Easy Method with the Deists, page 85, 86.

† Page 12, 13.

‡ Page 10, 194.

that too great a latitude has been given to the principles of dissent, and who lament the absence of other securities, less liable to objection, to supply the place of those removed."* On the merit or demerit of Lord Sidmouth's measure, I shall say nothing. To adopt the language of Lord Stanhope in reference to it—"I would not talk of the Bill that is dead and gone; and it would be beneath a man of sense to quarrel with the carcase."†

The Methodists, I believe, Sir, will generally be found to have acted on the defensive. Were they to take up offensive weapons against the members of the Establishment, it would only be to return the compliment. When speaking of the Baptist Missionaries in India,—men whom I can never name but with feelings of gratitude and sentiments of respect,—Mr. W. remarks, "We may very consistently admit, that their active perseverance has tended to meliorate the moral condition of the natives, without relinquishing our resolution to oppose them within the sphere of our influence. The same remark may be with equal justice applied to the Methodists."‡ And why are the Methodists to be *resolutely opposed*? Because "the system they have embraced is founded upon an erroneous interpretation of the Sacred Writings, is a needless deviation from the principles of the Established Church, and affords a most pernicious encouragement to the increase of fanaticism."§ How far this statement is correct will appear as we proceed. Mr. W. cites the opinion of Dr. Paley with peculiar satisfaction, and seems to place implicit confidence in his judgment.|| One of his quotations he ushers in with, "The following remarks of an admirable writer, in whom sagacity and judgment were happily blended, amply merit the attention of every reflecting mind." Remote, indeed, is it from me to deprive the Doctor of this meed of praise. Were his admirer to advert to the opinion he entertained of that people, whom it is his "*resolution to oppose*," it would perhaps have some

* Page 15.

† Speech in the House on the Bill.

‡ Page 20.

§ Page 20, 127. || Page 4, 78.

to say, "The inextinguishable zeal of the preachers produced a reform in the external conduct of many addressed, and contributed to subdue their barbarous excesses into comparative self-command and deportment." But even this he saps the foundation, by stating, "*All they have accomplished, alas ! for the comfort of society,—has been to mislead thousands by the dissemination of unfounded tenets*"† and then, "And the only credentials to which they refer, are the narratives of the calls they affect to have received from heaven to dispense the consolations of religion to a degenerate world, and the register of unnumbered souls, in whom their unwearied efforts have produced a spontaneous conversion ; a conversion which, in the estimation of all who retain possession of their sober faculties, is designated by no other terms, than a sudden advancement from weakness to fanaticism, or from folly to madness." In the next place he tells us, that Methodism has been of no advantage to Christianity, that the good has only been incidental, and of no advantage to the community at large. || From this may be inferred, that though Methodism has effected a reform, "that reform is *too much ;*" that the people had better have remained in a state "*of barbarism and excess,*" than been blessed with "*self-command,*" and mani-

festated "*decency of deportment*;"—that their "*barbarism*" was "*weakness*," and their "conversion" to "*self-command*," "*fanaticism*;"—that their "*excesses*" were "*follies*;" and their change to "*decency of deportment*," "*madness*;" and that this "*advancement*" to "*self-command and decency of deportment*" is of no "*real advantage*."*

Without taking advantage of Mr. W.'s inconsistencies, of the astonishing facility he manifests in building and destroying, I shall take it for granted that he is sincere in asserting, "that he is not of the number of those who deny that the exertions of the Methodists have, in any shape whatever, been productive of good."† That *good*, he states, is confined to the *lower orders*. These, he proceeds, "require a different mode of treatment from that which is adopted with the more fortunate part of the species."—"Hence we may readily allow, without making any unreasonable concessions, that to persons of the character here described, incapable of feeling the mild persuasives of a more polished eloquence, and unable to appreciate the deductions of reason, the vehemence, the coarseness, and the over-strained ardour of the Methodistical teachers, might be accompanied with advantages in vain to be expected from any other source."‡ Four particulars are here observable: 1. That the state of the *poor* demands aid. 2. That they have derived *good* from the ministry of the Methodists. 3. That the Methodist teachers are particularly *qualified* to instruct the poor. And, 4. That they may look *in vain* for such *advantages* from *any other source*,—from even "the mild persuasives of the more polished eloquence" of the clergy. Would Mr. W. deprive "the poor," who "have the gospel preached to them," of the instructions of the only persons qualified to teach them? And though they are of the "*lower orders*," to whom the Methodist preachers are said to direct their attention, have they not, in common "*with the more fortunate part of the species*," immortal spirits? Are those spirits not in danger of everlasting perdi-

* Page 132.

† Page 18.

‡ Page 19.

tion? Did not Christ lay down his life for them? The more barbarous the lower classes are, the greater their excesses, the more imperious is the necessity of prompt and effectual relief. To this work "the Methodistical teachers" have no objection to apply themselves; leaving the higher orders to the clergy, for whose peculiar case their "polished eloquence" is so well adapted. The opinion which Mr. W. has been pleased to express on the remarkable fitness between the mode of instruction among the Methodists, and the moral condition of the poor, is not novel. I recollect meeting with it, some years ago, in Boswell's Life of Dr. Johnson; only expressed in more gentleman-like terms. After observing, "that the Established Clergy, in general, did not preach plain enough," the Dr. said, "Something might be necessary to excite the affections of the common people, who were sunk in languor and lethargy, and therefore he supposed the new concomitants of Methodism might probably produce so desirable an effect."* This sentiment, from the pen of Mr. W. is intended as a reproach; from the lips of Johnson, the highest compliment. It appears, from the Doctor's statement, that the clergy "did not preach *plain enough*," and consequently could *not* be *understood*; that the people "were sunk in languor and lethargy," and *required re-forming*; and that the *probability* in favour of reformation was on the side of the *Methodist Preachers*. That this was the confirmed opinion of the Doctor is evident from another conversation which he had with Boswell, on the preaching and success of the Methodists. "Sir," said the Doctor, "it is owing to their expressing themselves in a plain and familiar manner, which is the *only way to do good* to the common people, and which the clergymen of genius and learning *ought* to do from a principle of *duty*, when it is *suited* to their *congregations*; a *practice* for which they will be *praised* by *men of sense*."† We find him censuring the clergy also, to Mr. Grierson, for not attending to plainness—for paying too

* Vol. ii. 122, Octavo Edit.

† Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. i. p. 435.

much attention to polished periods and glittering sentences, which fly over the heads of the lower classes, without making any impression upon their hearts.* And, when speaking of unhappy convicts, he gave it as his serious opinion, that a Methodist Preacher, or even a Popish Priest, should be preferred to the regular clergy, for real usefulness to the persons thus condemned by law.† In addition to the direct testimony of the Doctor in favour of the despised Methodists, it is stated that the venerable Bishop of Worcester, during his preaching, had observed a poor man remarkably attentive, and made him some little presents. After a while he missed his humble auditor, and meeting him said, "John, how is it that I do not see you in the aisle as usual?" John, with some hesitation, replied, "My Lord, I hope you will not be offended, and I will tell you the truth. I went the other day to hear the Methodists, and I understood their plain words so much better, that I have attended them ever since." The Bishop put his hand into his pocket, and gave him a guinea, with words to this effect, "God bless you; and go where you can receive the greatest profit to your soul."‡

When the Methodists can procure such advocates as Dr. Johnson and the Bishop of Worcester, on this subject, they will have but little ground to fear the "Rector of Great Brickhill." These testimonies are adduced, more with a view to vindicate the calumniated Methodists, than to condemn the clergy. Thank God! the number of evangelical clergymen, much as they are the butt of Mr. W.'s displeasure, are on the increase. These, like the pillars of a mighty fabric, will prevent the Establishment from falling into ruin. Superior to the applause of men, they would shrink at the very idea of purchasing it with the mere tinsel of "polished eloquence," at the expense of general usefulness. Spenser, in his Shepherd's Calender, reproves the ambition of pastors, under the similitude of a person ascending a height; and

* Ibid. vol. ii. p. 122.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 352.

‡ Dr. Haweis' Church Hist. vol. iii. p. 244.

advises them, if they would not only understand, but be understood, to *descend* :

“ But if thee lust to holden chat
With seely shepherd's swain,
Come down and learn the little what
That Thomalin can sain.”*

This old, but in reference to his fine narrative poem, the Fairy Queene, almost inimitable poet, knew, that *accommodation* was an important step to usefulness. It is not meant that a man is to descend to vulgarity, to enable him to teach the vulgar; but he must accommodate his language and subject, as far as is consistent with the dignity of the Christian ministry, to the intellectual, moral, and religious improvement of his hearers. The more I think on this subject, Sir, the more partial I am to the *old school*; especially to Methodism, which may be considered one of its branches. Mr. W. will find thousands of Methodists whose ears would be as much shocked, and to whose views any thing vulgar would be as repugnant, as the sayings of some of his clerical brethren, which are handed down to us, are in all probability to himself. In a sermon preached at court, the celebrated Dr. South says, in speaking of the delights of a soul *clarified* by grace, “ No man, at the years and vigour of thirty, is either *fond of sugar-plumbs or rattles*.” Another remark is, “ No man would preserve the *itch* on himself, only for the pleasure of *scratching*.”† If such language as this exists in the Methodist Church, the Establishment and herself may mutually exchange the sympathetic feeling, till it is expunged from the writings of the one, and expelled from the pulpits of the other.

Dr. Johnson, Sir, is not the only person who attributes the success of Methodism to the manner and style of preaching adopted. But the Methodists have been taught to look a little further than even the Doctor himself. They connect with “ great plainness of speech,” the *subjects* enforced, and the *power* of God accompanying them. I am

* Spenser's Works, vol. v. p. 248. Aikin's edit. + Sermons, ser. i. Prov. iii, 17.

not certain, whether the TRUTH of METHODISM, if you will allow the expression, could not be proved, and would not receive additional lustre, if the subject, with some variations, were taken up in a manner similar to that in which Lord *Lyttleton* has treated the "Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul." But its *success*, as an argument in its favour, is inadmissible. Thus at least would Mr. W. attempt to persuade his readers. Hence he observes, "The Methodists feel no hesitation in considering the successful propagation of their peculiar faith as an irrefragable argument of its truth. So often has this position been refuted, when applied to other cases, that it appears surprising how any reliance can be placed upon it by modern sectarists. But does not the rapid and extensive spread of Christianity soon after its first promulgation afford a most convincing proof of its Divine origin? We answer most cordially in the affirmative. But let it be recollected, that it is not its success singly considered, which can in this instance constitute a legitimate argument, but success under the peculiar circumstances in which that religion was placed in its infant state."* To this few will object. Not any thing, however, either in the objection or defence can possibly operate against the Methodists. They do not argue the truth of Methodism from its "success singly considered." Like many other things, this is palmed upon them by Mr. W.; and in this case charged against them apparently for the double purpose of helping himself to an argument, and shewing his power of discrimination. Had he paid closer attention to Mr. Wesley's Sermons,—sermons upon which, in connexion with other works, he informs his readers he has "principally relied" for his information,† he would have found that "success," or rather *extension*, as he explains himself in reference to the "rapid and extensive spread of Christianity," neither was, nor indeed is now, "singly considered;" but considered in union with many other particulars. In his Sermon on laying the foundation of the New Chapel,

* Page 122.

† Preface, p. 10.

City-Road, London, Mr. Wesley connects with *extension*, its *rapidity*, its *depth*, its *parity*, its *rationality*, the *opposition* it has surmounted, its conquests over *human depravity*, and its exemption from *superstition*, *bigotry*, and *persecuting zeal*.* Why then is the argument to be deemed valid in the case of primitive Christianity, and not in Methodism? Because, says Mr. Wainwright, of "the *peculiar circumstances* in which that religion was placed in its infant state." What were those circumstances? Just attend to Mr. W: "Before its general reception, it was compelled to encounter the determined opposition of the powerful, the hatred and contempt of the learned, the habits of the profligate, and the prejudices of the multitude. We know likewise that it was impossible, that the unassisted efforts of a few illiterate peasants, destitute of every thing that would confer influence and authority, should be able to subvert the established creed of civilized nations, and succeed in introducing a religion repugnant to the received notions, the favourite practices, and the depraved passions of the great mass of mankind; and there is, therefore, no alternative remaining, but either to deny the truth of all ancient and modern history, or to conclude, that in effecting this gigantic design, these humble individuals must have been aided by the supernatural interposition of Divine Providence."† Omit in this the "subversion of the creed of civilized nations," and you will find Mr. W.'s *distinctive* circumstances without a *difference*, applying equally to Christianity and to Methodism. Before Methodism, for instance, was generally received, it was compelled to encounter the determined opposition of the *powerful*: such as magistrates, chief constables, and other inferior officers of the civil law, together with a few of the clergy;—the hatred and contempt of the *learned*: such as Mr. Church, the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Exeter, Dr. Middleton, the Bishop of Gloucester, and a

* Works, vol. viii. p. 394—407.

† Page 123, 124.

‡ Mr. Wesley's Works, vol. ii. p. 453; 479; vol. iv. p. 465.

whole host of other doctors and literary characters;*—the habits of the *profligate*, which habits were subdued, as drunkenness, swearing, and sabbath-breaking;† and the prejudices of the *multitude*,—prejudices so powerful as to be manifested in mobbing and rioting.‡ We know likewise that it was impossible, that the unassisted efforts of a few *illiterate peasants*, or to adopt the language of Mr. W. when speaking directly to the qualifications of Methodist preachers, “the exertions of illiterate instructors, notoriously deficient in knowledge,”§ and destitute of every thing that could confer influence and authority, should be able, if not to subvert the established creed of civilized nations, at least to bring a considerable portion of the British community to a due consideration of its established creed, and to introduce a religion repugnant to the received *notions* respecting the operations of the Spirit,—the favourite *practices* of horse-racing, cock-fighting, bull-baiting, &c.—and the *depraved passions* of inordinate desire, anger, revenge, pride, and covetousness, to which the great mass of the people were attached, and of which they were guilty. There is therefore no alternative remaining, but either to deny the truth of what has been advanced by the most unexceptionable witnesses, or to conclude, that in effecting this gigantic design, these humble individuals must have been aided by the supernatural interposition of Divine Providence, and it may be added, the assistance of Divine grace.

Mr. W. in a tone of triumph asks, “Who will venture to assert that the vast extent of country in which the Mahometan faith has been zealously embraced, and still continues to flourish, furnishes a sufficient proof that the Prophet of Arabia derived his authority from heaven, and was commissioned to enlist the followers of the cross under the banners of the crescent? Who will undertake to prove that the tenets

* Mr. Wesley's Works, vol. xii. p. 281, 406; vol. xiii. p. 1, 169, 262; vol. xiii. vol. xiv. vol. xv.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 418; vol. iii. p. 85.

‡ Ibid.

vol. ii. p. 27, 51—56, 214, 234, 240—245, 255, 256, 286—297, 308, 453—455, 471.

§ Page 135.

and idolatries of the Romish church are of Divine origin, because this hierarchy comprehends within its pale the greater part of continental Europe? And yet upon this principle it is that the Methodists of recent times have founded their claims."* From what has been stated it will appear, I trust, Sir, that the Methodists do not found their claims alone on extension. They have beheld Methodism triumphing over the cradled opinions and prejudices, the temporal interests, and the vices of thousands. This is their glory, the revolutions it has effected for the better in the minds and morals of the people; and this leads them to glory in the Lord. Hence the stale illustration respecting the spread of Mahometanism and Popery, is inapplicable. Methodism is no other than Christianity under another name; and although it is declared to be opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ, Mr. W. has very prudently omitted to notice the specific points of difference. In adverting to the language of Gamaliel, Acts v. 38, 39, as employed by Mr. Myles in the Preface to his Chronological History, he says, "Without pausing to remark the presumption and weakness of thus comparing their own futile system, with the gospel of the divine Jesus, and of drawing a parallel where the circumstances are so totally dissimilar, I shall only observe," &c.† Mr. W. seems to proceed on the supposition, that it is *weakness* in any man, differing from himself, to employ Scripture in his own defence; and *presumption* to put upon the sacred text, other construction than what meets with his approbation. He has failed in one of his imaginary contrasts, where he deemed "the circumstances totally *dissimilar*." His present silence is perhaps not so much to be attributed to a want of time, which prevents him from "*pausing*," as to a want of *ability* to enable him to act. Every page of his work indicates, that "to will was present with *him*,"—that the *disposition* was there; and surely, in 217 octavo pages, he had *latitude* sufficient for "drawing the parallel." If it can be proved, as I trust it will be, that

* Page 124.

† Page 124.

the doctrines of Methodism are the doctrines of "the gospel of the divine Jesus," then Mr. Myles's use of the text is perfectly rational; and Mr. W. would do well to *pause*, and to examine his steps, lest in the rapidity of his flight he should be hurried over some precipice. You know, Sir, that the rider, urging his swift steed to the precincts of a given boundary, is in his career, sometimes in danger of being carried beyond the goal. Were Mr. W. to consult his favourite author, Dr. Paley, he would be able to discover the inaptness of his triumphant comparison. Mahometanism was founded in falsehood, propagated by the sword, left men the slaves of their passions and their vices, and buoyed them up with the prospects of a sensual paradise; whereas Christianity, or Methodism if you please, proclaims the cross, publishes peace, civilizes and evangelizes its subjects; or, in the half-acknowledged concessions of Mr. W. it "subdues the barbarism and excesses" of the people "to comparative self-command and decency of deportment."

Though the Methodists have effected what has astonished thousands, Mr. W. can contemplate nothing in the system, that extends beyond the power of human agency. "Powerful, (he remarks) as these *human* causes have shown themselves to be, we may yet indulge a confident hope that their efficacy will gradually cease as the minds of the people become better informed, and that this portentous delusion, which commenced amid the boastful prognostications of its authors, and the acclamations of the crowd, will ere long sink into merited disgrace, and silent contempt."* You perceive, Sir, desperate as the case is, Mr. W. indulges "*confident hope*." But by whom are "the people to become *better informed*?" Doubtless by Mr. W. who purposes to inculcate "a more *rational creed*," and introduce them to the enjoyment of a more "*rational religion*."† His *creed*, however, is such, as will be seen in the course of these Remarks, as utterly to exclude, in the present day, the inspiration

* Page 127.

† Pages 19, 54.

of God;* and his *religion* is of a character to allow him to plead for amusements of an immoral tendency, not only as perfectly innocent, but even of considerable utility. He argues against Methodism from its *abuse* :† and yet the same objection is to have no weight against the follies of life.§ Methodism has spread, and its advocates “may yet indulge a confident hope,” that it will continue to spread; not solely, as Mr. W. supposes, through the zeal of the preachers to propagate “*THEIR peculiar faith*,” || and the *plan constructed* by “the *wary* founder of this party;” ¶ but through their sincere endeavour to make genuine *Christians*, and the *Spirit* of God accompanying their exertions.

What seems to displease Mr. W. not a little is, the conduct of the Methodists in disclaiming the character of *Dissenters*.** As this subject has been entered into,†† in a letter addressed to R. Southey, Esq. and Mr. W. is well acquainted with “the later numbers of the Methodist Magazine down to the present time,”‡‡ it will be the less necessary to enlarge now. The ground on which they merit the appellation of Dissenters, is the unwearied efforts they have manifested “in diminishing the attachment of the inferior classes to the Church, in whose bosom they were nurtured.”§§ It is a fact, Sir, too notorious to be denied, that the major part of the Methodists, and especially “the inferior classes,” have been gathered from the immoral part of mankind. If Mr. W. will come forward and institute a claim to these, as persons who have been “*nurtured*” in the “*bosom*” of the Church, few will dispute the honour to which such a claim is entitled. Strange, however, as it may seem, those very persons are represented by him elsewhere, antecedent to their union with the Methodist body, as *weak, ignorant, foolish, and barbarous*; as the subjects of *strong passions*, and indulging in *excess*.||| Now, if to *nurture* signifies to feed and to

* Page 144.

† Page 184.

§ Pages 168, 174.

|| Pages 111, 112, 122.

¶ Page 119.

** Page 21.

†† Methodist Magazine, April 1818.

‡‡ Preface, p. 11.

§§ Page 21.

||| Page 18, 47, 187.

educate; and if those poor creatures were actually nurtured in *barbarism*, though in the very *bosom* of the Church, did it not, I ask, become a matter of absolute necessity, from their small, or rather non-improvement, to put them—say for the sake of experiment, upon a different course of *diet*, and send them to another *school*? From Mr. W.'s own account they could scarcely be plunged into a state of greater moral wretchedness. And yet he reprobates the Methodists for the adoption of certain measures to prevent them "from returning to their *former faith*;"* and laments that no activity will bring them back to the "long deserted religion of their ancestors."† Shall we, Sir, make an inquiry into their "*former faith*?" Mr. W. informs us, that those very persons are "Men whose *minds* have from their *birth* remained totally *destitute* of *cultivation*, whose *understandings* have *always* been *darkened* by *error*, and whose *habits* have experienced *no restraint* beyond what is imposed by *rigid necessity* and the *law of the land*."‡ Still they were nurtured in the bosom of the Church! With all their *food*, they remained in a state of "*weakness*;" with all their *education*, they were still the subjects of "*folly, barbarism, and error*." Had I not adverted to the title-page, and seen "OBSERVATIONS, &c. By the Rev. Latham Wainewright, A. M. F. A. S. of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Rector of Great Brickhill, in the county of Bucks," I should have been half inclined to lay these inconsistencies at the door of some person who had just been "*mingling in scenes of social hilarity*,"—scenes which he censures the Methodists for discountenancing,§ and in which the spirits are sometimes more elated, than the views are correct. In Mr. W.'s case, it can only be attributed to a deep-rooted prejudice which has obscured his better judgment.

Defective as the Methodists were, prior to their assumption of the name, in intellectual improvement, they are now, if we are to attend to the declaration of Mr. W. dreadfully

* Page 112.

† Page 192.

‡ Page 18.

§ Page 188.

degenerated. Formerly they were only *indifferent* to learning, but now they are actually *hostile* to any thing of the kind. "The discoveries of modern philosophy, (says he) the refinements of ancient literature, and the pleasures resulting from the productions of the fine arts, are to them of scarcely more value than the sand upon the sea shore. In their judgment, the deductions of scientific research, and the beauties of literary composition, are nothing more than the results of time mis-spent, and of labour mis-applied. Devoid of taste themselves, and enemies to its cultivation in others, they regard the glowing delineations of the painter, and the animated forms of sculpture, in no other light than as ministering to the pride of the wealthy, and as tending to perpetuate the remembrance of heathenish fables."* All that this charge merits, like many others, is a positive denial till suitable evidence is adduced. Not to pass it entirely unnoticed, the Methodists, it will be confessed by Mr. W. himself, are *poor* in the bulk. Admitting them, therefore, to have the *will*, they want the *ability*. Employed in their various secular concerns, from morning to evening, for a subsistence, they want *time*, as well as ability, for literary and other pursuits. Mr. W. may converse and write with a considerable portion of dignity and self-complacency, respecting the arts and sciences, when he has several *colleges* reared to his hand, and claims kindred with a Church united to the *state*—a Church which can boast of the *princes*, *nobility*, and *gentry* of the land for its members. To upbraid the poor Methodists, on these subjects, is as cruel and ridiculous, as it would be for a nobleman to censure one of the lowest of his menial attendants, for a want of the same taste and acquisitions with himself. Abandoning the general question, there are individuals belonging to the body, who are not without their titles, and who are connected with various literary institutions; while others, again, are encouraging, and making all the progress in the arts and sciences, time and circumstances will allow.

What other end the introduction of such a subject as this can answer, beside that of furnishing Mr. W. with an opportunity of relating what he has heard of "the gallery of the Louvre," &c. cannot well be determined. The next time he writes, and asserts, that the Methodists "*countenance no projects for the advancement of science*,"* he will do well to recollect what he may have read respecting their *contributions* towards the *support* of KINGSWOOD and WOODHOUSE GROVE Schools. Till you hear from me again, more immediately on the subject of *doctrine*, believe me, Sir, to be

Your's, affectionately,

Hull.

JAMES EVERETT.

LETTER II.

"Thou findest fault where nys to be found,
And buildest strong wark upon a weak ground:
Thou railest on right without reason,
And blamest 'em much for small encheason."†

Spenser's Sheph. Cal. May, line 144.

REV. SIR,

WHAT particular object Mr. W. can propose to himself in his "Observations," besides the destruction of experimental religion, and, as a natural consequence, the establishment of nominal Christianity, I find it more difficult than ever to perceive. To effect this, he indirectly cuts off all appeal to the Sacred Writings on the subject of Divine influence, by stating it to be peculiar to the apostolic age. This, it must be confessed, is a new ground of religious controversy; and a most singular one for a *divine*. If the influences of the Spirit, and extraordinary occurrences of Providence ceased, as we are informed,‡ with the age of miracles, the accounts which we have of them in Scripture,

* Page 188. † Nys, none. Encheason, occasion. ‡ Pages 36, 64, 77, 99.

can possess no more interest to us than any other historical fact. The whole may be read with the interest of *curiosity*, but not with the interest of *experience* and *improvement*. What is it to me, what the primitive Christians experienced, if I am not to be made a partaker of like precious faith? How can I improve from what is no concern of mine? Mr. W.'s system actually introduces us to a *new dispensation*, renders all appeal to the Bible nugatory, on the subject of Christian experience, and leaves us without a proper guide. The greater part of the Apostolic Epistles, which are taken up with God's gracious dealings towards man, thus becomes useless. These are the only legitimate inferences which can be deduced from Mr. W.'s statements. For, if those passages of Scripture, which speak of the operations of the Holy Ghost, are to be applied *only* to the primitive Christians; if at present we have *only* "the confident assertions" of individuals, both for the one and the other; and if their assertions are not to be credited;* what can be more plain, than the utter exclusion of the kingdom of grace, and the establishment of a maimed Deity, who, in special cases, is without the eye of Providence, and the arm of power? Remarkable, it should seem from such a doctrine as Mr. W.'s, as any thing may be, which is felt in the soul; and rare as any occurrence may seem, which takes place in domestic life; as we have only the assertions of individuals for them, and have neither seen nor experienced them ourselves, we are to discard the whole as a delusion. Would he proceed thus, as a philosopher? Would he not make an appeal to the most popular-standard works, for any thing that might come under his observation? And if he met with any thing in them which at all coincided with his own remarks, would he not be very much confirmed? The Bible is the Christian's standard:—a book, not intended for one *age*, for one *people*, but for every age and every person. It is the boon of heaven to MAN; and on *doctrine*, *morals*, and *experience*, it will be

* Page 53, 77.

the grand book of reference to the consummation of all things. If we are not to take the Sacred Records for our guide, as it respects experimental truth,—and we cannot take them for our guide unless there be something in them to meet the exigencies of our peculiar case, to what are we to resort? To the confident assertions of Mr. W.? Every age, if Mr. W. be correct, will require its revelation from heaven; and hence, instead of a *standing* test, we must have a regular *succession* of discoveries of the will of God. The apostle, too, or rather, which is still more awful—the Holy Ghost, is chargeable with an omission, in which is involved the felicity of millions of intelligent beings, for not specifying which passages belonged to the primitive Christians, and which to the experience of future ages of the church. Without a marked distinction, to direct our aberrant mind and steps, we might lose our way.

This is a subject, Sir, which ought not to be slightly dismissed. Upon this hinge the success of the controversy must turn: establish the propriety of appeal, and then you only have to cite chapter and verse. Do not mistake me: I would not be understood as insinuating, that Mr. W. states in positive terms, that *all* appeal to the Bible is to be excluded. He will allow it in some things, but not in others; he will indulge *himself* in this way, but not a *Methodist*. He would adduce the miracles of Christ, as an evidence of the truth of Christianity, for the conviction of a modern infidel; but he would not appeal to the experience of the primitive Christians, for the consolation and confirmation of a modern Christian. Thus, what he omits in explicit language, he produces in effect, by affirming that things at present can bear no relation to those of former ages; that the experience of the first converts to Christianity can be no criterion for us. The influence of the Spirit is of vital importance; for “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his:” and in things of moment, an appeal to Scripture is essential. It is not my intention, however, immediately to enter upon the doctrines of the Spirit, and an extraordinary Providence;

I only wish to smooth the path, by demonstrating, as far as possible, the necessity and propriety of appeal to Scripture.

It may be assumed as a fact, Sir, that the primitive church was to be the model of ours, and that the truths delivered in that church were to be preached to the end of time. Hence, whatever *coincidence* we may trace in modern ages, with things recorded in the Word of God;—whatever *similarity of effect* may be witnessed in the intellectual, moral, and political world, we are authorised to refer them to the same *cause*. Mr. W. informs us, that the witness of the Spirit, and salvation from sin, were confined to the first Christians; and that an extraordinary Providence terminated with the age of miracles. From whence has he derived his information? He may be defied, without any fear of his succeeding, to produce a solitary passage from the Sacred Text, to prove that either of these was limited in the manner described. It might here be demanded, by way of retort,—From what Scripture is it proved they were to be *perpetuated*? Waving all direct evidence, for the moment, it might be maintained from the *total silence* of the sacred records on the opposite side of the question: and, to say the least, something specific ought to have been stated on the subject. I am not now contending for the gift of tongues, and for the power of working miracles; but for what is essential to the comfort and moral safety of man,—for the *experience* of the Christian Church, which occupies so large a portion of the Word of Truth. Was not God with his church, in the power of his Spirit, of old? Did he ever give the smallest intimation that that power should cease? Has it not been his invariable plan, in matters of moment, in great moral and political revolutions, to give some express or predictive evidence of the same? Was not the whole of the Old Testament dispensation an intimation of the New? Would he, under the Mosaic economy, have introduced any change without informing his people? Is not the Apocalypse a prophetic declaration of God's dealings with the church through all future ages? When the New Testament dispen-

sation was ushered in, was it not intended as God's last dispensation of mercy to man? and that from the realization of types, the fulfilment of prophecy, and the circumstance of St. John being commanded to seal up the vision? Did the pious Jews ever cease to expect the accomplishment of any *promise*, to practise any *duty*, or respect any *ordinance*, that distinguished the *introduction* of their economy, till they had further discoveries from God himself? Even in the case of cities, families, and individuals, the Divine Being, when he has been about to visit them with some change, in the way of judgment or mercy, has condescended either to sound the alarm, or proclaim the promise. How much more, in so important a concern, as the Spirit's influence! It was as natural for a Christian of the tenth century to expect a *continuance* of the *essential* characteristics which marked the introduction of his dispensation, as it was for a Jew prior to the coming of the Messiah, in the particulars already specified. A caution, therefore, would become necessary to check such expectations. I need not remind you, Sir, that miracles are out of the question; I refer to the grand constituent parts which go to form the whole of the Christian system, and which, after its establishment by the preaching and practice of Christ and his apostles, was to be handed down to posterity in the writings of the New Testament.—That God intended the uninterrupted enjoyment of both of the disputed blessings, may be argued not only from the silence of Scripture, but from the *necessity* of the case. Are not men equally "far gone from original righteousness" now, with those in the apostolic age? Is it not *essential* to their *safety*, to be purified "by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" and to their *comfort*, to be assured of their adoption? Are they not exposed to the same dangers, and equally unable to extricate themselves, with those to whom God has extended his immediate interposition? I am far from supposing, however, that this species of negative evidence, is sufficient to establish the point in debate. There is something more positive. We find

at the BIBLE is the *only* ground of appeal in matters
n. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak
rding to this word, it is because there is no light in

at it is a *sufficient* guide and ground of appeal.
have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.—
hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will
persuaded though one rose from the dead."†

at it was the constant *practice* of CHRIST and
TTLES to appeal to the written word. Of our Lord
"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets,
unded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things
ng himself."‡ "And Paul, as his manner was, went
them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them
e Scriptures."§

at every thing delivered by CHRIST and the
s, on the essentials of Christianity, was *general* in
cation. "Heaven and earth," said Jesus, "shall
y, but my words shall not pass away." Some of his
ere, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me

20. † Luke xvi. 29, 31. ‡ Luke xxiv. 27. For other instances,
. iv. 4, 7, 10; chap. xii. 2, 3, 4, 5; chap. xxi. 16; chap. xxi. 18,
e xix. 46; Mark xii. 24; Luke x. 25—27, &c. &c. § Acts xvii. 2.
her apostles, Acts. ii. chap. iii. chap. iv. chap. v. chap. xviii.
v. xxviii.

and drink." - And to prevent any individual from applying this to the Jews, and to the days of our Saviour's flesh, the evangelist adds, "This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not given, because that Jesus was not glorified." Our Lord proceeds, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."* No less general were the apostles; "Whatsoever things," says St. Paul, "were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." "Which things also we speak, (things concerning the Spirit,) not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Speaking of Abraham, on the subject of imputed righteousness, he observes, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, but for us also." After having related different things respecting the children of Israel, he again remarks, "They are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." He still goes on, "Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances (*τὰς παραδόσεις*, *traditions*) as I delivered them unto you." "Hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle." "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." St. Peter, in the same style, says, "Ye have purified your soul sin obeying the truth through the Spirit—being born again, &c.—which liveth and abideth for ever. I will endeavour that you may be able, after my decease, to have these things in remembrance. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well to take heed, as to a light which shineth in a dark place—knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation."†

* Mark xiii. 31; John vii. 37, 39; chap. xii. 48. † Rom. xv. 4; 1 Cor. ii. 13; Rom. iv. 23, 24; 1 Cor. x. 11; chap. xi. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 15; 2 Tim. iii. 16; 1 Pet. i. 22, 23; 2 Pet. i. 13-21.

5. That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament will be the standard of appeal *to the end of the world*. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish from it." "Every word of God is pure:—Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." By *adding* or *diminishing*, we make the word of God "of none effect." Immediately after the invitation of the SPIRIT to every human being, to come and take of the water of life, St. John remarks, "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him all the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in the book."* To prevent Mr. W. from reaping any advantage from a limited construction of this curse, applying it *solely* to the *Apocalypse*, he ought to recollect that the doctrine of the Spirit's influence, which he wishes to "take away," is there inculcated.† Adopting his own language, in another case, "The import of these striking passages is at once so obvious and decisive, that I will not injure their effect by" further "adding paraphrase or commentary."‡

It should seem, that Mr. W.'s contracted views of Scripture, in restricting a considerable portion of sacred truth to the primitive Christians, has had no small share of influence on his practice. Curiosity has led me to notice the number of Scripture references in his work,—a work comprising 217 octavo pages, and I have found 53. What will astonish you not a little, Sir, is, that among the passages which Mr. W. affirms the Methodists quote in support of *their* system, he has perverted the meaning of *twelve*;|| *seventeen* are merely referred to, without stating whether they make for

* Deut. iv. 2; Matt. xv. 3--6; Prov. xxx. 6; Rev. xxii. 17--19. † Rev. i. 4; chap. ii. 7, 11, 17, 29; chap. v. 6; chap. xxii. 17. ‡ Page 90.
|| Page 59, 99, 125, 162, 163, 35, 36, 57.

or against them;* *six* are introduced by mere accident, some of which he has been assisted to by others;† and one belongs exclusively to the Roman Catholics.‡ In this manner we find 36 of the passages employed. As it respects the remaining 17, which are properly brought forward to defend his *own* system, *eight* are cited to prove the depths and inequalities of Providence,§ a doctrine in which the Methodists fully acquiesce, and consequently they are foreign to the point in hand;—*four*, as usual, accidental;|| four imperfect quotations culled from Dr. Mant;¶ and only *one* by way of positive proof, in favour of an established priesthood.** And yet this very gentleman winds up the whole in his "CONCLUSION" with, "We have seen how ill-supported the doctrines, mode of worship, and manners of the Methodists are, *by the pages of inspiration*:"†† and how well-supported, by the same test, is all he has advanced in defence of the church of England.‡‡ Without such an application, this method of treating an author would seem to intimate, that his cause is best, which has the greatest collection of Scripture texts heaped together. This, you will perceive, is not my drift. A man should never triumph on Scripture ground, without the sacred authority for his warrant. Never did I meet with a writer who made a greater noise about Scripture than Mr. W. and quote less; who asserted so much, and to persons acquainted with the subject, proved so little. To shew that his arguments do not amount to proofs, is the design of these pages. His system is only less Scriptural than his work; the one is barren, and the other unsupported. Christianity would have met with weighty obstructions, and such as it would have been ill able to surmount, if the apostles had been as sparing in their references to the Old Testament.

Having prepared the way, Sir, for an unrestricted appeal to Scripture, and proposing in this Letter to treat more im-

* Page 36, 57, 58, 106. † Page 43, 48, 148, 202, 203, 208. ‡ Page 100.

§ Page 67, 69, 70, 85, 89, 90. || Page 80, 83, 117, 155. ¶ Page 33.

** Page 120. †† Page 183. ‡‡ Page 182, 199.

mediately on the doctrines of grace,—doctrines, in the discussion of which, the Scriptures alone must be our guide, I shall now proceed to those parts of Mr. W.'s publication which either enter into, or lead to, the subject.

“However,” says Mr. W. “the opinions of speculative philosophers may be at variance on the principle of *moral obligation*, it is not to be disputed, that whatever can be shewn to promote the ultimate happiness of human creatures, *that* must be virtue; and, on the contrary, whatever defeats this end, and is productive of final misery, *that* must be vice.”* Let “*speculative* philosophers” differ as they may, it certainly behoves a *practical* minister of Jesus Christ, who has the Bible for his directory, to be clear in his definitions, and full in his statements. Whatever Mr. W. may intend here, the whole, as it now stands, is unconnected with the Supreme Being, and with his law. What that undefined something is, which will promote happiness, and which is to be designated *virtue*, he leaves his readers to conjecture. The same with *vice*. If with this we connect other parts of his “Observations,” where he denies the influence of the Spirit, and allows a pretty free use of the amusements of the day, which amusements are constituted legal, and productive of happiness, then we may have a new class of virtues presented to our gaze. It may be affirmed, that it is “*ultimate* happiness” which Mr. W. has in view, whereas pleasures derived from these sources are but *momentary*. What! are not all our pleasures and actions to have a reference to eternity? Is it not by our words and works, we are to be acquitted or condemned hereafter? Were we not sent into this world as probationers for another? Is it not expressly declared, “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap?” Can we then, after sowing plentifully the seeds of earthly happiness, expect to reap immortal joy? The only point of dispute on this article, between Mr. W. and a Methodist would be, in the assignment of proper *means* to pro-

mote so valuable an *end* as that of "ultimate happiness." Were it demanded of a Methodist, What is the thing itself that will procure present and final happiness? he would reply, The love of God shed abroad in the heart, producing love to our neighbour. Were it again demanded, How is this to be obtained? his answer would be, By repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In this is implied, a renunciation of sin, which, "is the transgression of the law,"* and which is "productive of final misery;" and not only a renunciation of the thing itself, but its very *appearance*.†

The less attention, perhaps, Christians pay to the controversies of mere "speculative philosophers," the better. To the former, the "principle of *moral obligation*" is divested in a great measure of its intricacy. They know that, as human beings, they stand in different *relations* to God and to their fellow-creatures; and that these relations constitute a *law of nature*, from whence they deduce *moral obligation*. They know too, that from their capability of happiness and misery, not any thing but what promotes the one and prevents the other, can constitute a law to our nature; and that as free agents, we can be laid under no other obligation. To ascertain the tendency of things to this important end, is the province of reason, but reason under the guidance of Revelation. By exercising our rational powers to find out proper means of obtaining happiness, a set of ideas are collected concerning the duties of life, and putting the whole together, the collection is called *morality*. This collection, consisting of a great variety of duties or actions proper to obtain happiness, it is found convenient to classify them, and assign to their proper stations those which we owe to God, to ourselves, to our neighbours, to the state, and to nations. As each class contributes its share toward the production of the general end, happiness—the whole is viewed in the light of *obligation*: for every creature is obliged to seek its

* 1 John iii. 4.

† 1 Thessal. v. 22.

of, and that is, though our *obligation* to virtue is
immutable, the *sense* of obligation is lost through
vice, instead of attending to the very first branch of
in seeking happiness alone in the worship of, and
to, the Supreme Being, we behold nations
to the grossest idolatry, and find a principle lodged
in man's breast, which is enmity against God. Instead
of adhering rigidly to the law of nature, the law
of private virtue, or public policy, the whole earth
is in a state of violence. Motives to obedience, therefore,
are necessary. God, in his word, commands it; Christ
gives an example of it; self-interest prompts us to it;
and the grace is offered to empower our feebleness to do
the will of our gracious Creator.*

One defect in Mr. Wainewright's work is, that there is
an *inefficiency* of God and Christ, even where he has some
reason in his favour. Here and there they are
present, but they are not sufficiently prominent where most
needed and frequently excluded. "There cannot, (says
the author) exist a semblance of a doubt, that virtue affords a
prospect of securing happiness and tranquillity to
who comply with its injunctions, even in this life:
but the tendency of vice, unchecked by the restraints
of the subject, Robinson's Preface to 4th Vol. of Saurin's Sermons,
Notes on King's Origin of Evil, p. 86, 306.

of law and conscience, is to produce effects diametrically opposite. Yet the satisfaction and advantage which accompany the one, and the misery so often consequent upon the other, *do not* proceed from any *express interference of the Deity*, but are the *natural result* of the moral relations inseparable from the condition of man."* Is it not a fair inference, Sir, that if happiness and misery be alone the *natural consequences* of virtue and vice, and God be excluded from *any interference*, virtue may be sought for her *own sake*, —for her own intrinsic value to the possessor? But if sought for her own sake, as she certainly must, on the supposition that there is no interference of God, we at once lose the proper idea of virtue, and confound the *means* with the *end*. However we might fit ourselves, by such a state of mind, for a reward from God, yet we have no claim to it, on the ground of any Divine promise. Supposing us to attain the good effects of every virtue in this life, we have our reward, in the way of natural consequence; if not, all claims upon God, through a Redeemer, must be ineffectual, since he was never thought of in the whole of our proceedings, as the Being upon whom we are dependent for all our blessings. The only principle that, in reason, can possibly recommend us to the favour of God is, doing every thing to his glory, and in obedience to his will. Acting from this principle, we shall not only be blessed with inward quiet, or the approbation of our consciences, as a natural and necessary result, but with attestations of God's favour. That tranquillity is the natural consequence of virtue, and misery of vice, can no more be questioned, than that ease succeeds the cure of a wound, and pain is the effect of a bruise. But Mr. W. proceeds on the supposition, that while virtue, like medicine, promotes health, the interference of the physician is unnecessary to its acceleration and perfection; and that pain is never augmented by a hand foreign to that which inflicted the wound; when, in fact, the physician himself is *obliged*

to put the patient to the utmost uneasiness, in order to effect a radical cure. Are we, with the Bible in our hands, to affirm that God never *increases* the misery of the transgressor, or the felicity of the virtuous, and that too, solely because of the rebellion of the one, and the obedience of the other? "To the law and to the testimony." Pharaoh experienced the natural consequence of his crime, viz. guilt, long before God said, "I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart."* Here God himself immediately *interposes*.—"I will *send*," not "I will *leave* thee to thyself, for thy sins to bring their own proper proportion of guilt upon thee: it shall not be *thy* guilt alone, but *my* plagues, with which thou shalt be visited." Of his people Israel he observes, "They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer."† Thus we again contemplate *sin* as the *cause*, *misery* as the *result*, and God as the *interposing agent* of vengeance. Disobedience would, in due time, have brought its own *fears*, but they are here *hastened* by a superior power.—"I will *bring* their *fears* upon *them*." The same people are again threatened;—"I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil that I have pronounced against them."‡ Is not the Divine interference equally visible here, in the *consequences* of disobedience,—in *bringing* upon Judah the threatened, but merited woe? Apply the subject to an *individual*. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."§ By the interposition of Divine Providence, we thus see the *natural consequences* of *enmity* cease. It is not said, that their *native* enmity against God and his people is rooted out of the heart; but in this particular case, in *consequence* of the person's *ways pleasing Him*, "He *maketh* even his enemies to be at peace with him;" he accomplishes what is actually opposed to the grain of human nature. Take another

* Exod. ix. 14.

† Isai. lxvi. 3, 4.

‡ Jer. xxxv. 17.

§ Prov. xvi. 7.

instance;—the case of *diet*. Some of the creatures of God, destined for the support of man, possess more of a restorative quality than others; and yet we find individuals more healthy, much fairer, and who live longer, with only "pulse to eat, and water to drink," than those "that eat of the portion of the king's meat."* Whence is this? The Sacred Writings inform us: "HE shall BLESS thy *bread* and thy *water*; and I will take away sickness from the midst of thee."—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."† It will readily be admitted, that Providence has *ordained* food for the *support* of nature, and that this *end* is effected, both in reference to *saint* and *sinner*. Notwithstanding this, we are to add to it, God's special interference in *blessing* it; a blessing which is frequently withheld or bestowed, according to the *conduct* of the creature. "He shall bless thy bread and thy water;" the very things previously ordained for that end. From these particulars, Sir, it appears that we have no Scriptural authority to exclude the Divine interference, in visiting with *consequences*, because of *obedience* or *disobedience*, whatever may be the *natural tendency* of the actions or things themselves.

Whence Mr. W. has derived the notions of *repentance*, with which he presents the Public as the views of the Methodists on the doctrine, it is not for me to determine. Certain it is, Sir, that he is neither indebted for them to your Apology for the Methodists, Mr. Wesley's Sermons, nor indeed any other publication authorised by the body. Since he only "*principally* relied" on these and the other works noticed in his Preface, he must have selected them from some other source. Adverting to the state of a penitent, he observes, and advances it too, as the opinion of the Methodists, "Unless the individual experiences a perfect *confidence* that he is justified by faith, unless he feels an *actual sense* of the Divine pardon, and a *plenary assurance* of his eternal

* Dan. i. 12, 13.

† Exod. xxiii. 25; Matt. iv. 4.

affections have undergone a complete and per-
 isformation." Without attempting, in the present
 arate what are so closely connected, viz. *desires*,
 i *feelings* and *affections*,—a work perfectly unne-
 may be remarked, that the Methodists, so soon
 experiences "*ardent desires to become a genuine*
 consider his "*feelings and affections*," if not
 nged, at least *undergoing* a change: for there
 l when he had no such desires—no such feelings,
 ther *hostile* to every thing of a Divine nature.
 two very important distinctions to which they
 . The one is,—that "*strenuous exertions*" are
fruitless," in point of *merit*, though of essential
means to secure a grand *end*—"the favour of
 The other is,—that "*ardent desires to become*
believer," do not constitute a man *such*. They
 the *desire* of salvation is not *salvation* itself, any
 the desire of food is to be construed into *bread*.
 ay have the desire of food without its enjoyment;
 at desire, may finally perish with hunger. Still,
 ese *desires*, with their connections, are of prime

importance; and are so far from being deemed "*fruitless*," as Mr. W. would have his readers believe, that Mr. Wesley actually includes them in his definition of repentance. "By repentance," says he, "I mean conviction of sin, producing real *desires* and sincere resolutions of *amendment*," and so on.* This definition too, Sir, I find inserted in your Apology for the Methodists.† So much for Mr. Wainwright's attention to the works on which he has "principally relied." It is nevertheless reiterated, that "Unless an individual experiences a perfect confidence that he is justified by faith, *vain* are all his *penitent feelings*, and all his *amendment of life*." Repentance, in Mr. Wesley's views of the subject, embraced both of these; and he never slighted repentance, or held it "*vain*." He contended, that without it, man must absolutely *perish*; that it necessarily *precedes* justifying faith; and that *God* must *effect* it in the heart.‡ He took his stand on Scriptural ground: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;"—"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;"—"Him hath God exalted—to *give* repentance."§ Aware, that "*penitent feelings*," though *useful* and *necessary*, were not *sufficient* of themselves, "to secure the favour of heaven," he exhorted his hearers not to rest in them; not to substitute *repentance* for *faith*, or *faith* for *holiness*. No less an example had he for this than St. Paul, who urged the *penitent* gaoler to *believe*; and who, though a *believer* himself, pressed towards the mark of *holiness*, and the prize of *heaven*. ||

It is much to be regretted, Sir, that a clergyman, like Mr. W. should be guilty of the grossest exaggerations, for the purpose, apparently, of making unnecessary distinctions, and criminating the Methodists. When a doctrine is too well established to be denied, he will load it with absurdities, and then charge those absurdities upon the body to

* Works, Vol. 12. p. 48, 296.

† Page 225.

‡ Works, Vol. 12, 296; especially his *Sermons*, Vol. 7, p. 96—99.

§ Luke xiii. 3; Acts iii. 19; chap. v. 31.

|| Acts xvi. 27—31;

Philip. iii. 1—14.

which he is so violently opposed. Thus, in the passages just noticed, the Methodists are represented as enjoining upon a "*well-meaning* man," the necessity of his being "*overwhelmed* with a sense of guilt almost too powerful for *endurance*." It is unnecessary to inform you, Sir, that it is not *their* practice, to select the "*well-meaning* man" from the crowd, and urge upon him the doctrine specified to this extent. As ALL have *sinned*, and come short of the glory of God,"* they act upon the broad basis of exhorting *all* to repentance, because God himself "Now commandeth ALL MEN every where to repent."† Guilt, in their judgment, is proportioned to the multitude and magnitude of the *sins* perpetrated; and they leave it with God to work in the heart what degree of "*godly sorrow*" he deems sufficient to bring the sinner to himself. It can no more be expected, that the "*well-meaning* man," whose outward conduct has been moral, should experience the same poignant grief as the murderer, or the abandoned profligate, than that he should be exempt from the general rule—"Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Associating this selected character with the general mass of sinners, the Methodists would enjoin no more upon him than what is actually urged in the Homilies of the Established Church. Hence we read, "Therefore also now the Lord saith, Return unto me with all your heart, with *fasting, weeping, and mourning*: *rent* your hearts, and not your clothes," and return unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great compassion, and ready to pardon wickedness. Whereby it is given us to understand, that we have here a *perpetual Rule* appointed us,‡ which ought to be observed and kept at all times, and that there is *none other way* whereby the *wrath* of God may be *pacified*, and his *anger assuaged*; that the *ferceness* of his *fury*, and the *plagues* of *destruction*, which

* Rom. iii. 23.

† Acts xvii. 30.

‡ The writers of the Homilies had not so learned Christ, as to apply *experimental truths* to particular persons and ages, exclusive of the rest of mankind. No, it was to be a "*Perpetual Rule*."

by his *righteous judgment* he had *determined* to *bring upon us*, may *depart*, be *removed*, and taken away." Perceiving that the doctrine might be abused, either by some of their contemporaries or successors, or both, the authors further observe on the words of Joel, "He doth add (to fasting) weeping and mourning, which do contain an *outward profession of Repentance*, which is very needful and necessary; that so we may partly set forth the righteousness of God, when by *such means* we do testify, that we *deserve* punishment at his hands, and partly stop the offence that was openly given to the weak." Lest they should still be misunderstood, and, if possible, to guard against all attempts to fritter away what may be deemed the *soul* of the whole, they proceed, "Now lest any man should think that Repentance doth consist in *outward weeping and mourning* only, he doth (that is Joel) rehearse that wherein the *chief* of the *whole matter* doth lie, when he saith, Rent your *hearts*, and not your *garments*, and turn unto the Lord your God. For the people of the East part of the world were wont to rent their garments if any thing happened unto them that seemed intolerable. This thing did *hypocrites* sometimes *counterfeit* and follow, as though the *whole* of *Repentance* did stand in such *outward gesture*. He teacheth then, that *another* manner of thing is *required*; that is, that they must be *contrite* in their *hearts*, that they must utterly *detest* and *abhor* sins, and being at *defiance* with them, return unto the Lord their God, from whom they went away before. For God hath *no pleasure* in the *outward ceremony*, but *requireth* a *contrite* and *humble heart*, which he will never despise, as David doth testify. There is therefore none other use to these outward ceremonies, but as far forth as we are *stirred up by them*, and do serve to the glory of God, and to the edifying of others."* This is the doctrine taught by the Methodists, and this is the doctrine which Mr. W. as a conscientious minister, ought to preach;—a doctrine too, including, as described by the venerable guardians of the Establishment,

* "Homily of Repentance," p. 324, Fol. Edit. 1683.

the deepest distress of mind. Did not the "*horrible pit*" precede David's "*new song*,"—Peter's *bitter weeping*, his "*joy unspeakable*";—Paul's *fasting, blindness, and distress*, on his route to Damascus, his *heights and depths of love*?

"Repentance of former transgressions, (says Mr. W.) is an essential preliminary to every one desirous of becoming a disciple of Christ. What, however, is the required *proof* of this repentance? Not inward sensations of despondency; not unavailing and inert lamentations for our lost condition; but a resolute change of external conduct, and a lasting reformation of evil habits."* Repentance is not denied, but rather taught, to be "*an essential preliminary to every one desirous of becoming a disciple of Christ.*"† Nor are "*sensations of despondency, and inert lamentations for our lost condition,*" advanced as marks or *proofs* of genuine repentance. In Mr. Wesley's Sermons, and in your Apology, Sir, works upon which he has "*principally relied,*" he will find a very different description of the doctrine in question. Opposed to "*sensations of despondency,*" unless it be despairing of saving ourselves, the real penitent is encouraged by the most consolatory promises.‡ Instead of fostering "*inert lamentations,*" he is exhorted to believe, and to use the utmost diligence.§ He is even informed of the necessity of "*a resolute change of external conduct, and a lasting reformation of evil habits.*" Thus "*By repentance I mean conviction of sin, producing real desires and sincere resolutions of amendment; and by fruits meet for repentance, forgiving our brother, ceasing from evil, doing good, using the ordinances of God, and in general, obeying him according to the measure of grace which we have received.*"|| The Methodists include all that Mr. W. advances; but in addition to that, they accompany the writers of the Homilies on the subject of *contrition of spirit*; whereas he ridicules the idea of *conviction of sin, grief, anguish, tears, and groans.*¶

* Pages 41, 42,

† Wesley's Works, Vol. 12, p. 344.

‡ Wesley's

Works, Vol. 7, p. 99—100; Benson's Apology, p. 227, 228.

§ Ibid.

|| Works, Vol. 12, p. 314; Apology, p. 225.

¶ Page 42.

His repentance is softened down to a mere *external* change of deportment: and in this he is no less at variance with the passages just cited from the Homily on Repentance, than with the writings of the New Testament. To the latter he makes an appeal; but as he neither refers to chapter nor verse for his proofs, I am at a loss to know to what part to direct my attention. In defence of the Homily, and of Methodism, I would observe, that there are two words used by the Holy Ghost, in Scripture, for *repentance*. The first refers to the repentance of Judas.* The word is μεταμεληθεὺς, from μετα *after*, μελομαι, *to be concerned*; that is to *repent one self*, or to be concerned *after* something improperly said or transacted. That no advantage may be taken from the inefficacy of Judas's *tears* and *anguish*, the Methodists are perfectly decided, that *sorrow*, without *amendment*, would be equally unavailing. Hence, with the first they connect the second word,† which is μετανοια, signifying *after-wit* or *after-wisdom*. It denotes, according to lexicographers, a returning to our wits—a becoming wise after our folly—a firm purpose of amendment. While the first is simply expressive of *distress* for a fault committed, the second imports a *change of mind*, or a being *more wise in future*. The Methodists are aware, that there may be the one without the other; and hence their anxiety to connect them; for, if divided, as in the case of Castor and Pollux, whose division, we are informed, was deemed ominous and fatal, it cannot be justly termed *repentance unto life*. *Sorrow for past sin*, should never be separated from a *hatred* to it, and the *renunciation of it*.

What seems most objectionable to Mr. W. is, the rapidity with which the work proceeds. "It is affirmed by the disciples of Methodism," says he, "that every true believer, before he has any authority to expect the salvation, *must*, at some period of his life, undergo, a *sudden* and an entire change in his principles and mental feelings; during which the odious nature of sin is placed before him in the strongest colours."‡ That persons are sometimes *suddenly*

* Matt. xxvii. 3.

† 2 Tim. ii. 25.

‡ Page 25.

convinced of "the odious nature of sin," the Methodists certainly affirm; but it is because they have been witnesses of such facts. This, however, is remote from asserting, that, conviction of sin, to be genuine, "*must*" be "*sudden*." They no more assign any given period to this part of the work of God, than they fix the proportion of penitential sorrow which every individual ought to experience. Nevertheless, whether slow or sudden, they insist upon the essentiality of the thing itself; and consider it as occupying a prominent place in the doctrine of repentance. Ridiculed as "*conviction of sin*" is, by Mr. W. and denied as a tenet "to which the genuine members of the Establishment cannot possibly yield their assent, and which, in truth, they regard as evidently resulting from a spirit of enthusiasm, and a perverted imagination,"* the Methodists dare not withhold "*their assent*" to it, because taught by the disciples of Jesus Christ, and effected in the soul by the Holy Ghost. "Ye commit *sin*," says St. James, "and are **CONVINCED** of the law as *transgressors*."† Our Lord, speaking of the office of the Spirit, says, "And when he is come, he will reprove (ἐλεγξει, or *convince*,) the world of *SIN*."‡ Few, I am sure, of "the *genuine members* of the Establishment," will thank Mr. W. for placing them at variance with Scripture. As though suddenly awakened, not observe, with the most distant idea of the subject being at all consonant with *Scripture*, but with its *reasonableness*, he contrives to contradict what he had just affirmed, by stating, "We freely admit that no man can reform his conduct till he is *convinced* of the criminality of his former *habits*, and *feels* that *regret* with which such a conviction must of *necessity* be attended. But this reformation we contend *must*, in order to be permanent, be *gradual* in its progress."§ Admitting it to be *gradual* in its *progress*, is that to be deemed a sufficient proof that it is not *sudden* in its *commencement*? But why "*must*" it be "*gradual*?" Is there any "*needs be*" for this? Here

* Page 25.

† Chap. ii. ver. 9.

‡ John xvi. 8.

§ Page 29.

we are again at issue. It is not contended by the Methodists, that it "*must*" be either *slow* or *sudden*, but that it "*must*" be *genuine*. They are delighted to see a *reformation* of any kind, and seldom deliberate on the *manner*, when they are convinced that the *work* itself is *effectual*. There is certainly a predilection in favour of a hasty reformation; and I dare say, you, Sir, will be ready to conclude with the Methodist body at large, that the *sooner* mankind are reformed the better. Instead of adopting a strain of language which seemed to indicate, that sinners were to take time, and to consider the propriety of a reformation—a work, as Mr. W. tells us, which is "the result of much deliberate reflection," you would sound in their ears the trump of God,—"*Choose you THIS DAY whom ye will serve;*"—"*To-DAY if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;*" "*Behold now is the accepted TIME; behold, NOW is the DAY of salvation.*"*

Dreadfully afraid, lest the sinner, who has violated the laws of God, should experience too much uneasiness of mind, Mr. W. shews the baneful effects of such a doctrine as that of "*conviction of sin.*" He remarks, that "*Many an unfortunate object, whose natural disposition may have been tinged with melancholy, and who has long been accustomed to view human nature in its darkest aspect, has been led by the preaching of these self-elected instructors to feel the effects of a conviction of sin in their full force, but, with all his reiterated efforts, has never been able to acquire that happy assurance, which he is told never fails to accompany, or to follow, a true saving faith.*" And what is the prospect such an individual is thus *compelled* to contemplate? However undeviating may have been his perseverance in well-doing, he can look forward to nothing but '*tribulation and wrath;*' nor will all the means of grace enjoined in the gospel, while he is depressed by fears and doubts, enable him to escape final destruction."† Should the melancholy being, thus described, not make a *merit* of his "*undeviating*

* Josh. xxiv. 15; Heb. iii. 15; 2 Cor. vi. 2.

† Page 48.

perseverance in well-doing," and his attention to "all the means of grace enjoined in the gospel," he will meet, in Methodism, with ample encouragement. To such an one a Methodist Preacher would change his theme from "a conviction of sin" to the promises of the gospel. On the other hand, to a person who reposes confidence in these things as meritorious, Methodism offers no consolation, because unauthorised by Scripture. To persons of this Pharisaic cast, it is to be feared, Mr. W. alludes; for the whole passage is perfectly unconnected, on his own side of the question, with *faith* in the *merits* of *Christ*. Such characters never reflect, that "the *means* of grace" may be used, without their enjoying the *grace* of the *means*. Now, every Methodist knows, that the *means*, exclusive of the *grace* of them, would no more satisfy the soul *thirsting* after righteousness, than the *pipe* or *conduit*, which conveys the refreshing stream to the abodes of men, would allay their thirst, without the water. With the Establishment, they have learned to distinguish between the grace and the means; as where she teaches us that a Sacrament is "An outward sign of inward *grace*, and a *means* whereby we receive the same." Mr. Wesley, with the same caution, in his SERMONS, guards the people against confounding the means with the end.* There must be some radical defect in the system of those persons, who use "All the means of grace enjoined in the gospel," without arriving at the enjoyment of religion. "Ye ask," says the apostle, "and receive not, because ye ask amiss."†

Granting Mr. W. what he advances, viz. that the doctrine may produce unfavourable impressions on the minds of the melancholy; is it for that reason not to be preached? What! are the *multitude*, who need it, never to hear it, because the *few* are weak enough to deduce from it unfavourable inferences? Is it a doctrine that cannot be guarded? Surely there can be no difficulty in this. When an individual is sincere in the use of the means—mourning—trusting in Christ alone for salvation, how easy is it to address him

* Works, vol. vii. p. 221-2.

† James iv. 3.

in the language of Mr. Wealey, "Whosoever thou art, to whom God hath given to be 'poor in spirit,' to feel thyself lost, thou hast a right to the kingdom of heaven, through the gracious promise of him who cannot lie. It is purchased for thee by the blood of the Lamb. It is very nigh: thou art on the brink of heaven. Another step, and thou enterest into the kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy."* It was in this way that he was accustomed to cheer the disconsolate; and if Mr. Wainewright will only give his Sermons a second reading, and not only "principally" but *altogether* "rely" on them for his information, he will find that he adapted his advice, exhortations, reproofs, warnings, and entreaties, to the characters he addressed; "rightly dividing the word of truth." Nor did he, any more than his followers, consider it impossible for a person "to escape final destruction," merely because of his being "depressed by fears and doubts." He had too much discrimination to confound *guilt*, with *fears and doubts*; and knew that the latter might be present without the former, and that too without at all endangering the safety of the individual. Fear is more an expression of timidity than of distrust. It is a proof that the person is not yet made perfect in love, but it is not a blot that obliterates his Christianity. This, however, can only be applied to such as really possess religion, and to whom Jesus would say, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"† There is no consolation for a melancholy being, who resolves to persist in his sins. There is no remedy against despair, when the despairing sinner refuses to renounce those ~~times~~ *times*, the remembrance of which causes all his distress. It would be as unscriptural to soothe the mind of such an one with the balm of Christianity, as it would be cruel to augment the grief of the penitent.

Mistaking his way, as he does in the outset of religion, it is not likely that Mr. W. will improve much as he proceeds. A person who is about to discharge a ball from

* Works, vol. vii. p. 330.

† Matt. xiv. 31.

a fowling-piece, may possibly find, in running his eye along the barrel, that the muzzle only appears to be a few inches from the mark. He is soon convinced, that the ball verges wide of the point at which he aims, in proportion to the distance it has to fly. Methodism is the butt of Mr. W.'s indignation. Without different materials from those he has hitherto employed, his attempt at its demolition will be vain. "Wealey," he informs us, "considered *justification* itself as distinct from a *sense of pardon*, which were often confounded by his followers."* No one will attempt to deny the former part of this, Mr. Wesley considered *justification* and *pardon* as one and the same thing. "The plain notion of justification," says he, "is pardon, the forgiveness of sins."† Since he considered them the same, he could no more confound *justification* with a *sense of pardon*, than he could confound *justification* with a *sense or assurance of justification* itself. I can as easily distinguish between *justification* as an *act* of God, and a *sense* of it, as *enjoyed* by man, as I can discern between an *impression* upon my spirit, and the *cause* of that impression. Though Mr. Wesley had learned to distinguish between cause and effect, and betwixt different doctrines, yet he was cautious not to *separate* them. He was aware that, though a necessary connexion between the members of the human frame may be demonstrated, yet, when once separated, they cease to be living members; just as justification ceases to be genuine, when separated from any of its evangelical effects. Mr. Wainwright was perhaps never more wide of the mark than when he states the Methodists to hold, that a man "is justified by the irresistible effusion of the grace of God." Though justification is *perceptible*, it is not, as stated, *irresistible*.‡ Their whole system declares, that a man may *resist* the grace of God against himself, in every stage of his Christian pilgrimage. Equally erroneous is he, where he supposes that "Momentaneous justification and a plenary assurance of pardon," are produced

* Page 36. † Works, vol. vii. p. 67; also vol. vi. p. 309. ‡ P. 26, 51.

by a *change of ministers*.* With the apostle and with their founder, the Methodists attribute the whole to the free grace of God;—"Being justified freely by his GRACE, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ."† The ministry of the word would, by an old Puritan divine, be considered as the *remote* or *accidental cause* of our justification.

As though Mr. W. were sensible of the injustice he had done the Methodists, he begins to veer a little; though not without censure, in order to keep up the spirit and propriety of attack. "In asserting the necessity of justification by faith," he observes, "they agree, in expression at least, with the declarations of the Church of England; but respecting the *mode* in which it is accomplished, and the effects by which it is followed, they differ most widely."‡ If they agree "in *expression*," why does a *clergyman* attempt to oppose? Why! because they differ in "the *mode*" and "the *effects*." What precise ideas Mr. W. attaches to the term "*mode*," is impossible for me to conceive. For *faith* itself is part of the "*mode*," or *method*, of *justification*: hence, to "*agree in expression*"—the expression of "*justification by faith*," is to agree in "*mode*," since *faith* is included in the *mode*. It is foreign to my present purpose, Sir, to enter fully into the doctrine of justification. In addition to Mr. Wesley's sermon on the subject, and other remarks in different parts of his Works, there are two excellent treatises, published by the late Mr. P. Haslam, and the late Mr. Hare, which supersede the necessity of a lengthy discussion, and which contain a pretty correct Methodistical view of the doctrine. I shall barely satisfy myself with such a view of the subject as will tend to repel the charge. In confirmation, that the Methodists and the Church of England do not "*differ* most widely," take the following particulars. Mr. Wesley, and those late in connexion with him, affirm,

1. That man is a *sinner*,—depraved by nature, and vicious in practice.§ The Establishment, on this subject, is

* Page 121.

† Rom. iii. 24. Wesley's Works, vol. vii. p. 155.

‡ Page 163.

§ Wesley's Works, vol. vii. p. 64; vol. xii. p. 5—315.

explicit; "Original sin is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit."*

2. That, as a sinner, he is exposed to *punishment*.† What says the Church? That "We are very sinful, wretched, and damnable;" "Every person born into this world, deserveth (through sin) God's wrath and damnation."‡

3. That *we cannot*, by any works of our own, *effect our own deliverance*.§ To keep this in countenance, we read, "In ourselves (as of ourselves) we find nothing whereby we may be delivered from this miserable captivity into the which we were cast, through the envy of the devil, by breaking God's commandment in our first parent Adam. We are all become unclean, but we all are not able to cleanse ourselves nor to make one another of us clean. We are by nature the children of God's wrath, but we are not able to make ourselves the children and inheritors of God's glory. We are sheep that run astray, but we cannot of our own power come again to the Shepherd, so great is our imperfection and weakness." Again, "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will."||

4. That *repentance*, already noticed, *precedes justification*.¶ This is in perfect conformity to the language of the Church: "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe the gospel."**

* Articles, former part of ixi. + Wesley's Works, vol. vii. p. 64; vol. xi. p. 414. † Article ix. Homily on the "Misery of all Mankind, and of his condemnation to death everlasting, by his own sin." Page 6—11.

§ Wesley's Works, vol. vii. p. 98.

|| Homily ii. p. 10; Article x.

¶ Wesley's Works, vol. 12, p. 344.

** See "Collect for Ash Wednesday;" Communion Office; Visitation of the Sick, &c.

5. That the *merits* of Christ, including his life and death, is the grand cause of our justification.* Such too is the doctrine taught by the Establishment. "Our justification doth come freely by the mere mercy of God, and of so great and free mercy, that whereas all the world was not able of themselves to pay any part towards their ransom, it pleased our heavenly Father of his infinite mercy, without any our desert or deserving, to prepare for us the most precious jewels of Christ's body and blood, whereby our ransom might be fully paid, the law fulfilled, and his justice fully satisfied. So that Christ is now the righteousness of all them that do truly believe in him. He for them paid the ransom by his death. He for them fulfilled the law in his life."†

6. That *faith* alone is the *condition* of our acceptance with God.‡ "Consider diligently these words," says the Church of England, "without works by *faith only*, freely we receive remission of our sins." "That we are *justified by faith* alone, is spoken, to take away clearly all merit of our works, and wholly to ascribe the *merit and deserving* of our justification unto Christ only."§

7. That the *fruits*, or *effects*, of justification, are *love, joy, and peace*.|| Thus again, we read, "Faith does not shut out repentance, hope, love, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified; but it shutteth them out from the office of justifying. So that, although they be all present together in him that is justified, yet they justify not altogether."¶

8. That *good works, inward and outward holiness*, naturally and necessarily *follow* justification.** Not less deceived is the Church of England on this particular. "Of (justifying) true faith, three things are specially to be noted; first, that it doth not lie dead in the heart, but is lively and

* Wesley's Works, vol. xii. p. 58. † Homily of Salvation." Part i. p. 13, 14.

‡ Wesley's Works, vol. vii. p. 72; vol. xi. p. 415, 416. § Homily "Of Salvation," Part ii. p. 14, 15. || Wesley's Works, vol. vii. p. 308.

¶ Homily "Of Salvation." ** Wesley's Works, vol. vii. p. 71, 308.

fruitful in bringing forth good works. Second, that without it, can no good works be done, that shall be acceptable and pleasant to God. Third, what manner of good works they be, that this faith doth bring forth." The fruits are then illustrated.*

Now, Sir, I should be glad to know, after this statement, to support which, a reference has been made to the respective authorities, in what the Methodists "differ so widely" from "the Church of England," on the subject of justification; either "respecting the *mode* in which it is accomplished, or the *effects* by which it is followed?" Equally solicitous I am to be acquainted with the points of difference between this view of the subject, and the bible; especially that part of it—"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given to us."†

In the Preface of 1562, attached to the Homilies, it is intimated, that one reason why they were written and published was, because "All they which are appointed ministers, have not the gift of preaching sufficiently to instruct the people, which is committed unto them, whereof great inconveniences might rise, and ignorance still be maintained, if some honest remedy be not speedily found and provided." Things must have been in a deplorable condition, to have rendered such a reason necessary. If there be any truth in that almost proverbial expression, "*Whom God calls, he qualifies*," is it too much to say, that such as "have not the gift of preaching sufficiently to instruct the people," are not "appointed" by heaven? But, Sir, is the

* Homily "Of Faith," p. 20—27.

† Rom. v. 1—5.

Christian ministry, in different churches, more ably supported now, than it was in that early stage of the Reformation? If the sermons, and various treatises published, be specimens of what is delivered in the pulpit, it is to be feared, that many of those who attempt to correct others, have not the "*gift*" of preaching themselves. Such characters would do well to return to first principles, and rather than deliver their own crude and heterodox notions, begin and read the Homilies, and administer proper nourishment to the flock of Christ.

Admitting justification to be a doctrine of God, yet all *sense* of it is denied. "*Sensible* justification," as Mr. W. terms it, is merely the result "of enthusiasm, and a perverted imagination."* Indeed, every thing, bearing upon a knowledge of the influence of the Spirit, is discarded. Hence, in allusion to the operations of the Holy Ghost, he affirms, "Neither Scripture nor reason will authorize us to suppose that this influence is ever actually perceptible by the person on whom it is exerted, or that it can ever be distinguished from the ordinary operations of his own mind."† In this, Mr. W. is not singular. The *imperceptibility* of the Spirit's operations, is a doctrine widely disseminating among a certain class of the clergy.‡ Though Mr. W. as usual, talks about Scripture, he is careful to keep us in the dark relative to any passage which at all countenances *his* side of the question. No authority from *Scripture*! Did not those in the apostolic age know they were under the influence of the Spirit—who were justified by faith—rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory—who had the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the *Holy Ghost* given unto them—who were washed—sanctified—sealed with the Holy SPIRIT of promise—who, through the SPIRIT, were mortifying the deeds done

* Page 25. † Page 91, 92. ‡ The Rev. W. H. Rewlatt, who has lately published *Sermons on the Evidences, the Doctrines, and the Duties of Christianity*, has stated his views on the subject in similar terms; and, what is not a little alarming, he states them partly on the authority of a Rt. Rev. Prelate.

in the body—had the EARNEST of the SPIRIT—and were bringing forth the fruit of the SPIRIT?—Did not, I say, all these know that their bodies were temples in which the HOLY SPIRIT dwelt?* Mr. W. has a very convenient way of surmounting the difficulty, by placing such texts as these exclusively to the account of the *primitive* Christians. Having endeavoured to cut up this doctrine by the roots, in the former part of this letter, I have simply referred to the texts. Every individual, who attentively considers the subject, must view them as general in their application.

In the publication of a clergyman, the doctrine is peculiarly objectionable; because opposed to the creed of that Establishment by which he is fed and clothed. What! “Neither *Scripture* nor reason will *authorize* us to suppose that *this influence* is ever actually *perceptible* by the *person upon whom it is exerted*!” Is it possible, that this should be the language of a clergyman? a clergyman who officiates in that church which speaks of our *feeling* the Spirit—of our being *filled* with the Spirit—of our being *moved* and *inspired* by the Holy Ghost? What! *inspired* and not *know* it! put in *motion*, after that which is good, and not *feel* it! Impossible. I had thought, Sir, of collecting the various passages on this subject out of the Homilies, Liturgy, &c. and presenting you with them. But I find this done to my hand in the Works of Mr. Wesley;† and shall, therefore, satisfy myself with an extract therefrom.

“In her daily service, she teaches us all to beseech God, ‘To grant us his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do at this present, and the rest of our life may be pure and holy;’ to pray for our Sovereign Lord the King, that God would replenish him with the grace of his Holy Spirit; for all the Royal Family, that they may be endued with his Holy Spirit, and enriched with his heavenly grace; for all the clergy and people, that he would send down upon them the healthful Spirit of his grace; for the

* Rom. v. 1—5; 1 Pet. i. 8; 1 Cor. vi. 11; 2 Cor. i. 22; Ephes. i. 13; 1 Cor. vi. 19.

† Vol. xii. p. 110.

Catholic church, that it may be guided and governed by his good Spirit; and for all therein, who at any time make their common supplications unto him, that the fellowship or communion of the Holy Ghost may be with them all evermore.

"Her collects are full of petitions to the same effect:
 'Grant that we may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit.*
 Grant that in all our sufferings here, for the testimony of thy truth, we may, by faith, behold the glory that shall be revealed, and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, may love and bless our persecutors.† Send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity.‡
 O Lord, from whom all good things do come, grant to us, thy humble servants, that by thy *holy inspiration* we may think those things that are good, and by thy merciful guidance may perform the same.§ We beseech thee, leave us not comfortless, but send to us the Holy Ghost to comfort us.¶
 Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort.¶
 (N. B. The Church here teaches all Christians to claim the Comforter, in virtue of the promise made, John xiv.) Grant us, Lord, we beseech thee, the Spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful.** O God, forasmuch as without thee, we are not able to please thee, mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts.††
 Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name. Give thy Holy Spirit to this infant, (or this person,) that he may be born again.‡‡
 Give thy Holy Spirit to these persons, (N. B. already baptized,) that they may continue thy servants. Almighty God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these persons by water and the Holy Ghost; strengthen them with the Holy Ghost

* Collect for Christmas-day. † St. Stephen's-day. ‡ Quinquagesima Sunday.
 § Fifth Sunday after Easter. ¶ Sunday after Ascension-day.
 † Whitunday. ** Ninth Sunday after Trinity. †† Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.
 ‡‡ Communion Office.

the Comforter, and daily increase in them the manifold gifts of thy grace.*

“From these passages it may sufficiently appear, for what purposes every Christian, according to the doctrine of the Church of England, does now receive the *Holy Ghost*. But this will be still more clear from those that follow, wherein the reader may likewise observe, a plain, rational sense of God’s revealing himself to us, of the inspiration of the *Holy Ghost*, and of a believer’s *feeling* in himself the mighty working of the Spirit of Christ.

“‘God gave them of old grace to be his children, as he doth us now. But now, by the coming of our Saviour Christ, we have received more abundantly the Spirit of God in our hearts.’ *Homily on Faith*, part ii. ‘He died to destroy the rule of the devil in us, and he rose again to send down his Holy Spirit, to rule in our hearts.’ *Homily on the Resurrection*. ‘We have the Holy Spirit in our hearts, as a seal and pledge of our everlasting inheritance.’ *Ibid.* ‘The Holy Ghost sat upon each of them, like as it had been cloven tongues of fire; to teach, that it is he that giveth eloquence and utterance in preaching the gospel; which engendereth a burning zeal towards God’s word, and giveth all men a tongue, yea, a fiery tongue. (N.B. Whatever occurs in any of the journals, of God’s ‘giving me utterance,’ or ‘enabling me to speak with power,’ cannot therefore be quoted as enthusiasm, without wounding the church through my side.) ‘So that if any man be a dumb Christian, not professing his faith openly, he giveth men occasion to doubt, lest he have not the grace of the Holy Ghost within him.’ *Homily on Witsunday*, part i.

“‘It is the office of the Holy Ghost to sanctify: which, the more it is hid from our understanding, (i. e. the particular manner of his working,) the more it ought to move all men, to wonder at the secret and mighty workings of God’s Holy Spirit which is within us. For it is the Holy Ghost that doth quicken the minds of men, stirring up godly

* Office of Confirmation.

motions in their hearts. Neither doth he think it sufficient inwardly to work the new birth of man, unless he doth also dwell and abide in him. Know ye not, saith St. Paul, that ye are the temple of God, and that his Spirit dwelleth in you? Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost which is within you? Again he saith, Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, for why? The Spirit of God dwelleth in you. To this agreeth St. John; The anointing which ye have received (he meaneth the Holy Ghost) abideth in you. And St. Peter saith the same, The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. O what comfort is this to the heart of a true Christian, to think that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in him! If God be with us, as the Apostle saith, who can be against us? He giveth patience and joyfulness of heart, in temptation and affliction, and is therefore worthily called *The Comforter*. He doth instruct the hearts of the simple, in the knowledge of God and his word; therefore he is justly termed *The Spirit of Truth*. And where the Holy Ghost doth instruct and teach, there is no delay in learning.' *Ibid*.

"From this passage I learn, 1. That every true Christian now receives the *Holy Ghost*, as the *Paraclete*, or *Comforter*, promised by our Lord, John xiv. 16. 2. That every Christian receives him as the *Spirit of Truth*, (promised John xvi.) to teach all things. And, 3. That the anointing, mentioned in the first Epistle of St. John, abides in every Christian."

Can you imagine, Sir, that it ever entered the minds of the persons who composed the Homilies, and the Liturgy, that the whole of what they described was to be *imperceptible* to the Christian? that is, that it was neither to be known nor felt? was not to be "*distinguished from the ordinary operations of his own mind?*" Such a doctrine, exclusive of its want of Scriptural support, must be attended with the most pernicious consequences, leading men to content themselves with a name to live while they are dead. Any mere moralist, by comparing his belief of the Bible, and his outward conduct with those of the genuine Christians, will, in his

own estimation, be in a perfectly safe state. The operation of the Spirit upon the *heart*, is the grand criterion by which to judge, since a similarity of *external* deportment already exists. While it is calculated to sooth the formal professor, to the sincere Christian it must be peculiarly distressing. A devout worshipper of God takes up his Bible, and casts his eye on a portion of Scripture already quoted—"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." He proceeds to the next epistle but one, and reads, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"* Now, Sir, if it be impossible for him to distinguish the Spirit of Christ from his own spirit; if he cannot tell whether the Saviour dwells in him, does not the Apostle appoint him to a very fruitless task, when he exhorts him to *examine* himself? Nor is this all, but on the supposition that he is unable to come to any proper conclusion, he immediately infers, that he is none of Christ's, and consequently associates himself with reprobates. Unless he be certain that he possesses the Spirit of Christ, he cannot ascertain whether he belongs to Christ or Belial. And if so, how can he address God as his Father—"Abba, Father?" He must, in the first instance, know that he is a *son*, before he can adopt this language. And how is he to know it? The apostle informs us, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."†

You will perceive, Sir, that I have hitherto omitted that portion of sacred writ which is immediately to the point in debate; and I have adopted this plan for the purpose of permanent impression. "He," says St. John, "that believeth on the Son of God; hath the witness in himself." That we may not be ignorant of what this *witness* is, another of the sacred writers asserts, that "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."‡ How do these passages accord with the sentiment—That the

* Rom. viii. 9; 2 Cor. xiii. 5. † Gal. iv. 6. ‡ 1 John v. 10; Rom. viii. 16.

influence of the Spirit can never be distinguished from the ordinary operations of our own minds? Here is a *Spirit distinct from our own*; and a Spirit, too, bearing its own testimony. To suppose its *testimony* to be so *uncertain*, and its *operation* so *feeble*, as not to assure the believer of his sonship,—not to be perceptible by him, would be a sad reflection upon the Supreme Being. When witness is delivered in court, the *presence* of the person bearing witness is necessary. May not the witness of the Spirit then, Sir, be defined—*The sensible presence of God in the soul*? for where God deigns to enter, his presence must as infallibly bear witness of his favour to the subjects of this amazing grace, as the presence of an earthly guest assures us that we entertain such an one in our house. The expression *αὐτο το πνεῦμα* cannot possibly denote any *disposition* or *affection* of mind which the adopted person may feel, but must refer to God himself—God the Holy Ghost, by whom alone the knowledge of adoption is witnessed to the soul of the believer.

Though Mr. W. admits of the possibility of "A reformation in the government of the conduct and passions," yet, "a consciousness of having obtained this favour" is deemed unnecessary.* It is not sufficient, therefore, as you will have perceived, Sir, to discountenance any *knowledge* of the cause, that is, of the *Spirit* dwelling in us; but also any *consciousness*—any *assurance* of the *effects*. Whither will such a notion as this lead us? Will it not evidently terminate in this? That a person who was once proud, envious, revengeful, and a hater of others, cannot ascertain whether he has been humbled before God, cannot tell whether he bears good will towards his fellow creatures, returns good for evil, and prays for those that persecute him? Though the Methodists are generally of opinion, that a Divine change will produce its internal evidence, they are far from believing, as Mr. W. would insinuate,† that a person cannot be safe without "a plenary assurance of his eternal salvation," or even of his present acceptance. Mr. Wesley was charged with this,

* Page 34, 35,

† Page 34,

but hear his reply: "I believe a *consciousness* of being in the favour of God, (which I do not term *plerophory*, or *full assurance*, since it is frequently weakened, nay, perhaps interrupted, by returns of doubt and fear,) is the common privilege of Christians, fearing God and working righteousness. Yet I do not affirm, there are no exceptions to this general rule. Possibly some may be in the favour of God, and yet go mourning all the day long. (But I believe this is usually owing either to disorder of body, or ignorance of the gospel promises.)* In thus blending a consciousness of reformation, with an assurance of pardon, you will be ready to conclude, Sir, that I am confounding what are perfectly distinct; but I do it by way of accommodating myself to the writer whose principles I am combating, who unites them on the same page. What is not a little singular, Mr. Wainewright encourages his readers in one part of his publication,† to pray for pardon, and yet renounces any knowledge of its attainment. Hence we must pray in the dark. If we cannot tell when we are forgiven, there will be a danger of our praying for what, unknown to ourselves, we may have already obtained.

Unwilling to dismiss the subject of inspiration—of the Spirit's work upon the heart, Mr. W. returns to it again and again apparently determined to banish it from the moral world. "Not to dwell upon the fact," says he, "that inspiration, or any thing approaching to it, has for many ages been withheld from the mind of man, we may reasonably be allowed to infer, that if any honest though uninformed persons were endued with extraordinary gifts for the purpose of communicating Divine truth to the world, they would at the same time be enabled to express themselves in the language of their auditors, at least with grammatical accuracy.‡" Till now, Sir, I was not aware that it was the office of the Spirit to teach *grammar*; or that "grammatical accuracy" was to be the test of a man's inspiration. In the inspiration of *suggestion*, divines, I believe, are agreed, that

* Works, vol. xiii. p. 128. † Page 148. ‡ Page 144, 145.

God dictates the very words in which those discoveries he makes are to be communicated, provided they are intended as a message to others. But Mr. W. was not necessitated to set aside inspiration merely for a little inaccuracy in grammar. He might have allowed the inspiration of *superintendency*—*plenary superintendent inspiration*—or the inspiration of *elevation*. Or he might have admitted that which he solemnly professed before the Bishop that ordained him, when he declared his belief that he was *moved* by the HOLY GHOST, to take upon himself that sacred office. Supposing him to have altered his mind on the last subject, still he might have allowed that which he prays for every Lord's-day, viz. "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the INSPIRATION of thy HOLY SPIRIT, that we may perfectly love thee and worthily magnify thy holy name." Surely this must be "something *approaching*" to inspiration. If, however, Mr. W. be correct, that it "has for *many* ages been withheld from the mind of man," it is certainly high time to have the sentiment expunged from the Liturgy. His next work should be to move a convocation of Bishops for this purpose.

It is Mr. W.'s opinion, that, when a person of an "uncultivated understanding" relates any thing that involves "internal feelings," it is "preposterous to yield an implicit credence to his statements and asseverations."* Even "his alleged *consciousness* ought not to be deemed a sufficient proof to others that he is truly inspired."† He then proceeds to shew the evidence necessary, in matters to be submitted to the external senses; viz. a "Sound understanding, integrity of character, and corroborating circumstances."‡ In thus expatiating on the impropriety of placing implicit reliance upon the testimony of another, relative to his internal feelings, &c. Mr. W.'s readers would be led to conclude, that the Methodists urged one person's assurance for another's conviction. This is not the case. The assurance of a believer is *solely* for his own

* Page 61.

* Page 52.

† Page 59.

comfort. It is a matter between God and himself. The Methodists take up the *Bible*, and, for the conviction of others, advert to chapter and verse; "We know that we have passed from death unto life." And certainly, there is as much reason, and as much Christian charity, in believing that man's testimony, who affirms he is conscious of the approving smile of heaven, and evinces the truth of the same by producing corresponding fruit, as there is in giving credit to the unsupported assertions of Mr. W. *Consciousness*, however, as shall appear in its proper place, is not the only proof, as alleged.

The various passages of Scripture, upon which is immovably fixed the doctrine of *assurance*, are, as usual, applied by Mr. W. to the primitive Christians. Such a thought is enough to make us dissatisfied with our present lot, and to excite in our bosoms a wish that we had lived in the apostolic age, rather than under the present dispensation, so decidedly marked for its inferior privileges. Referring to the texts in general, he remarks, "To make them the foundation of a doctrine at once so inequitable and so useless as an assurance of pardon, distinctly and sensibly imparted to every genuine believer," is "at variance with the general tenour of the inspired writings, and with the exercise of sound reason."* *As all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, all need forgiveness.* We find, that Christ was exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give it; and that men, on *repenting, may obtain it*.† Where then is the inequity of the thing itself? Or how can an assurance of it be *useless*, when it imparts consolation to the soul, and satisfies man on a subject of the utmost moment—his reconciliation with God? From Mr. W.'s views of its inutility, one would be led to conclude, that, if it were tendered to him, he would scarcely deem it worth his acceptance. Useless as it is, it is taught by the Church of England. It is included in her definition of faith, which is "A *sure trust and confidence* which a man HATH in GOD, that through

* Page 37.

† Acts v. 31; iii. 19.

the *merits* of CHRIST his *sins* ARE *forgiven*, and he *reconciled* to the *favour* of God."

Much stress as Mr. W. lays on the phrase "assurance of pardon and salvation," he ought to know that Mr. Wesley was very sparing in the use of it, and that when he did employ it he took care to affix to it proper Scriptural ideas. One reason of his caution was, to prevent the very error into which Mr. Wainewright has fallen, viz. that of leading people to confound an assurance of *pardon* with an assurance of *final* salvation. Hence, said one of his opponents, "Mr. Wesley might have considered that when they talk of *assurance of pardon and salvation*, the world will extend the meaning of the words, to our eternal state." His reply is, "I do consider it, Sir. And therefore I never use that phrase, either in preaching or writing. 'Assurance of pardon and salvation,' is an expression that never comes out of my lips."* He goes even further, and of the single word *assurance*, says, "Some are fond of the expression, I am not: I hardly ever use it."† Well might the world confound the subjects adverted to, when Mr. Wainewright has not escaped the error. Not only does he confound an assurance of *pardon* with an assurance of *final* salvation,‡ but he charges the Wesleyan Methodists with "a palpable contradiction" for holding "the *same* assurance of faith" with the Calvinists, "who assert the *impeccability of the elect*," and "yet deny the certainty of final perseverance."§ However the Calvinists, by holding "the *impeccability of the elect*," may, in the language of Mr. W. "establish their right to entertain a full assurance of their *future* acceptance," it should be recollected, that the assurance of faith among the Methodists, refers to *present* acceptance: and they are far from maintaining that a sense of pardon, will, of itself, secure a life of piety, or prevent a man from finally apostatizing from the truth. They connect with future felicity, holy *obedience*—perseverance in well doing. Could it be demonstrated that they hold, "Once in grace, always in

* Works, vol. xiii. p. 36.

† Ibid, 187.

‡ Page 46.

§ Page 38.

grace," then, to separate present assurance of pardon from final perseverance, would be "a palpable contradiction." This contradiction was charged upon Mr. Wesley; and how well he succeeded in warding it off, may be seen in his Works.* Had Mr. Wainwright only cast his eye upon it in his researches, we should probably not have had the accusation reiterated. The Methodist believer is favoured with an assurance of his present, not his future salvation. With him, final salvation is an object of *hope*; and only of *assurance*, on condition of *obedience*. And the man who is destitute of a well-grounded *hope of heaven*, subjects his religious attainments to suspicion. Mr. W. is of a different opinion, and he is welcome to all the consolation it can impart. He considers "the *absence of hope*" no impediment in the way of persons "attaining that reward of their virtue, to which their humility forbids them to aspire."† We have heard of *despair* excluding *hope*; but never *Christian humility*. On the contrary, the man who is exhorted "Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think," and not to "mind high things," is reminded, that, in that state, it is his privilege to be always "*Rejoicing in HOPE*."‡ The same apostle represents "Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we:" but mark what follows; we only continue a part of that house, by holding "fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the HOPE firm unto the end."§ If "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience HOPE, and HOPE maketh not ashamed,"|| what must be the *experience* and the *shame* of those who are sensible of "the *absence of hope*?" nay, whose religion actually "*forbids*" them to "*aspire*" after that which is an object of hope? From these passages of Scripture, it may be safely contended, that the "*virtue*" which is unproductive of *hope*, is *spurious*; and, if *spurious*, no *reward* will be given. The very *absence of hope*, therefore, will, in a certain sense, be detrimental to a person's future reward,

* Vol. xiii. p. 36.

† Page 34.

‡ Rom. xii. 3, 16, 19.

§ Heb. iii. 6.

|| Rom. v. 3—5.

because the *sole cause* of its *absence* is, the *want* of a *meeting* for eternal felicity.

On the subject of a *Divine changewrought* in the soul by the energy of the Holy Ghost, the *consciousness* of which has in part engaged our attention, Mr. W. states, "These operations in the mind, which have been designated by the generic appellation of *Christian experience*, are marked by two circumstances claiming particular notice. In the *first place*, this mental change, in order to render it *genuine* and *effectual*, must be *sudden*, and capable of being minutely described: and in the next place, it is considered as of such *essential importance*, that without it no believer can extend his views beyond the grave, with any degree of security or hope."* Sudden conviction has already been noticed. But is it necessary, Sir, to say, that the Methodists do not maintain, that, in order to an entire change being "*genuine and effectual*, it *must* be *sudden*?" To you, it is perfectly unnecessary, particularly when I bring to recollection some of your polemical writings, where the same subject is taken up, and the charge repelled.† Though they have had instances of *sudden conversions*, they are careful not to institute the *suddenness* of them as a *necessary* property. They maintain that they *must* be *real*,—otherwise, *no safety, no hope* beyond the grave. This, whatever Mr. W. may think to the contrary, was the very doctrine which Christ taught: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."‡ The Methodists have long been charged with holding the *suddenness* of conversion an *essential* property of it. So early as the year 1739, a person branded Mr. Wesley with it: and what was his answer? A bare negation: which was all that a bare assertion merited. "You charge me," says he, in a letter to the individual, "with not allowing men to be in a salvable state, unless they have experienced some *sudden* operation, which may be distinguished as the hand of God upon them, overpowering, as it were, the soul. O Sir, can you prove this charge upon me? The Lord shall judge in

* Page 27.

† Fletcher's Life, Appendix, p. 429.

‡ John iii. 3.

that day!"* True, Mr. Wainewright quotes a passage from the Minutes of 1812, in which he supposes he has obtained some advantage. Examine the passage: "Salvation is not by faith, unless every blessing bestowed upon us by the Lord is *instantaneous*."† On the strength of this passage, Mr. W. says, "The *conversion* required by the Methodists is *sudden* and *instantaneous*."‡ The members of Conference, under whose sanction and by whose authority the Address from whence the sentence is taken was published, could not mean that the *work* of *Divine grace* in the *heart of man*, whether of *illumination*, *conviction*, *conversion*, or *renovation*, is *always instantaneous*, and in *no degree gradual*; because that would be to contradict the writings of Mr. Wesley, by whose writings they are bound together as a body; and because it would be partly to contradict themselves; for the sentence finishes with "And this doctrine is perfectly consistent with the *gradual* work of sanctification in *all its branches*, and in *all its stages*." Now, a great degree of that very sanctification which is here spoken of as *gradual*, invariably, according to the testimony of St. Paul, accompanies justification; "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."§ The passage unquestionably denotes, that with respect to the *blessings* of the gospel, not any of them are procured by our *works* or *progressive holiness*, but are the *free undeserved gifts* of *Divine grace*, to be received by our simply *believing* in *Christ*, and in the *truths* and *promises* of the *gospel* through him, and may therefore be received even *now* by the most unworthy; at least in some degree, though not in that great measure, in which we may afterwards receive them. Thus, Abraham believed God when God said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." What was the consequence? His faith was *immediately* accounted to him for righteousness.|| So also the jailor at Philippi, believed

* Works, vol. i. p. 399.

† Minutes of Conf. vol. iii. p. 303, 8vo. edit.

‡ Page 89.

§ 2 Cor. v. 17.

|| Gen. xv. 5, 6; Rom. iv. 3.

in Christ, and was *immediately* filled with joy and peace.* In short, Mr. Wainewright speaks of *conversion*, and conversion too, as *necessarily* instantaneous; whereas the Minute refers to such *blessings* as, on *believing*, a person receives in the use of the ordinances, founded on "Ask, and receive." Mr. W. further remarks, that, "Policy has dictated the expedience of requiring,—that the converted Methodist should name the day, and, if possible, the hour, in which the vital change was effected."† Though, in a general way, the period is *known*, it is not *required*. It is not so much, *when* and *where*, as *are you now converted to God*. The soldier can talk loud and long on the subject of former exploits; of the campaigns in which he has been: the scars he has received; his early valour. But how is he now? Perhaps a cripple and a coward. Men, in the day of God, will receive sentence as they are *then* found.

In opposition to the persons whose principles he combats, Mr. W. observes, "This reformation (or *conversion* rather, as appears from the next sentence,) we contend must, in order to be permanent, be gradual in its progress, and the result of much deliberate reflection."‡ To say nothing of the *uncertainty* of human life, which might be adduced with some plausibility as an argument against the work being *necessarily* gradual, we have instances of it in Scripture being effected both slowly and instantaneously. When the Methodists speak of *sudden* changes, they more immediately refer to what God *has* done, than presume to limit him to the same in future. Mr. W. by his mode of writing, would compel them to say, that God *ought* to work so and so, because he *has* hitherto wrought in this way. He roundly asserts, that for such sudden convictions and conversions, as are explained by them, "We shall in vain search the Scriptures for any solid foundation."§ Finding, however, that the *fact* of sudden conversions cannot be evaded, he recollects himself in a page or two, and calls in the aid of

* Act xvi. 25—34.

† Page 50.

‡ Page 29.

§ Page 30.

the celebrated Dr. Mant, who enables him to set them aside in modern times, from the cause which produced them in the apostolic age. "Where the conversion was sudden or instantaneous," says the Dr. "it was the consequence of miraculous evidence to the truth. When the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost added to the church 3,000 souls, they were men who had been *amazed* and *confounded* by the effusion of the Holy Ghost, and the supernatural gift of tongues."* Let us see, Sir, if we cannot rescue this fact of Scripture history, from the improper grasp of these gentlemen. We find, 1. That the *apostles and brethren*, who were *all members* of the *Christian Church*, about 120 in number, were assembled in an *upper room* in Jerusalem.† 2. That the apostles and disciples *only saw* the cloven tongues of fire—were *filled* with the Holy Ghost—and *spoke* in different languages.‡ 3. That, on a report of this being spread abroad, multitudes of people collected together.§ These had neither *seen* any thing that had occurred, nor had they *then* received the Holy Ghost.¶ Having only *heard* of the descent of the Spirit, their evidence, making a little allowance for the lapse of time, was similar to our own, being confirmed in the truth by *reading*. 4. That when they heard the apostles speak in different dialects, they, in common with all who read the account with seriousness and attention, were *amazed* and *confounded*.¶ 5. That, instead of being properly *convinced*, much more *converted*, they were *all* in *doubt*, and some not only *doubted* but *mocked*** In this state, the *miracle* left them; *unconvinced* and *unconverted*. The scene now changes, and we find, 6. That Peter begins publicly to *preach Christ*.†† 7. That, from the circumstance of his addressing the *multitude*, and particularly accosting the inhabitants of *Judea* and *Jerusalem*,‡‡ it is probable he preached in his *native language*. 8. That, in *consequence* of his *preaching Christ*, and not

* Page 32, in a Note.

† Acts i. 12—15.

‡ Chap. ii. 1—4.

§ Ver. 5, 6.

¶ Ver. 38.

¶ Ver. 7, 12.

** Ver. 12, 13.

†† Ver. 14—36.

‡‡ Ver. 14.

of the *miraculous gift of tongues*, "They were pricked in their heart."* Hence, it is said, "Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart." And, 9. That it was not till *after this*, that *signs of conversion* appeared, and the *three thousand* were added to the Church.† From this statement, it should seem that Dr. Mant is as much mistaken as Mr. W. who has embraced his opinion without sufficiently examining the subject. Admitting, however, for the sake of argument, the miracle to have been the occasion of such an accession of members to the church of God, why must it follow, that it should operate to the conviction of the multitude "*at once*?" Do we not find that they were actually in *doubt*? Must no time elapse, as in case of doctrine for people to examine whether a miracle be *true* or *false*? Are ancient prejudices for a favourite religion so easily conquered? Notwithstanding all the miracles the Jews saw; they still clamoured for signs; and Paul found the greatest difficulty in inducing them to abandon the ceremonies of the law. Mr. W. too, were he to take pains to examine the subject, would find that the conversion inculcated in the New Testament, is something more than what he states, a bare change from *Judaism* or *Paganism* to *Christianity*; whereas, continues he, "The conversion contended for by the Methodists is a change from corruption and sin to purity and holiness."‡ This, in other words, is saying, that every *professor* of the Christian Religion is a *Christian*; and that, as the conversion of the Methodists differs from the conversion of the New Testament, the *former* implying "a change from corruption and sin to purity and holiness," the conversion of the *latter* will neither admit of "purity" nor "holiness," but will permit its subjects to wallow in "sin and corruption!"

After having adverted to the doctrine of assurance of pardon, "This," says Mr. W. "is the proof, and the *only* proof, on which any reliance is placed, of the *conversion*

* Ver. 14, 36, 37.

† Acts ii. 37--47.

‡ Page 31.

of the sincere Methodist; for we must remember, that good works *without this experience of grace*, are considered as no certain indication of the Christian's repentance."* To shew how ill supported this is by evidence of any kind, a reference to Mr. Wesley's Works would be quite sufficient, where, in addition to assertion, both the *fruit of the Spirit* and the *fruit of good living*, are required in confirmation of the whole.† Or let any man read over the General Rules of the Methodist Societies, and say whether nothing else be required of a person, in proof of his conversion to God, than bare *assertion*. He will there discover, that, as an evidence, the very thing is required which Mr. Wainwright denies to the Methodists, that is, "permanent character;"‡ and not as he affirms in the same place, "constitutional temper and fervour of imagination." It is expected that every member shall continue to evidence his *desire of salvation*, and still more his actual *conversion*, by avoiding swearing, a profanation of the Sabbath, drunkenness, fighting, quarrelling, brawling, railing, going to law with his brethren, buying or selling uncustomed goods, giving or taking things on usury, unprofitable and uncharitable conversation, costly apparel, foolish diversions, singing songs, reading improper books, self-indulgence, laying up treasure upon earth, and borrowing without a probability of paying:—by doing good both to the bodies and souls of men, according to his ability, in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, reproving the guilty, using all diligence, frugality, and in taking up the cross:—and, lastly, by attending to all the ordinances of God, as public worship, the ministry of the word, the supper of the Lord, family and private prayer, searching the Scriptures, together with fasting and abstinence.§ This, Sir, is certainly putting *conversion* to the test; and a test too, which the "permanent character" of many of the opposers of Methodism, would be ill able to brook.

* Page 43, 44.

† Works, vol. xiii. p. 273; 134.

‡ Page 47. § Wesley's Works, vol. vi. p. 304--307, particularly p. 309.

We are presented with a string of what Mr. W. designates *good works*, such as feeding the hungry, comforting the afflicted, &c. and which he intimates avail a man nothing in the estimation of the Methodists, "as long as he is destitute of that particular mode of justifying faith, and its concomitant assurance, which are pronounced by the partisans of Methodism to constitute the only passport to the realms of bliss."* It has been proved, Sir, and, I trust, clearly, that the Methodistic notion of justification by faith, is substantially one with that of the Establishment, and both agree with the notion we have of it in the Bible; and that the doctrine of assurance is countenanced by the Church of which Mr. W. considers himself a member. This being admitted, it will be no difficult task to produce others, beside Methodists, who will not hesitate to pronounce what are improperly called "good works, *without THIS EXPERIENCE OF GRACE,*" utterly useless or unavailing. The *love of God* in the human heart, and *saving grace*, are, it will be readily conceded, equivalent; and that the man who is destitute of the one cannot possibly possess the other. What are the views of St. Paul, of the *works* of a man, without love? "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity," (*αγάπην, love,*) "I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."† Next to St. Paul, attend to the language of the Church of England. "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, (i. e. before justification, as the title expresses it,) are not pleasant to God, soasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ—yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and

* Page 44.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3.

commanded them to be done, we doubt not they have the nature of sin.”* To this article, as a conscientious man, Mr. W. must have subscribed, before he took upon himself the priest’s office. If you proceed from the Articles to the Homilies, Sir, you will find the same sentiments. “Without faith can no good work be done, acceptable and pleasant to God. For as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, saith our Saviour Christ, except it abide in the vine, so cannot you, except you abide in me. Faith giveth life to the soul; and they be as much dead to God that lack faith, as they be to the world whose bodies lack souls. Without faith all that is done of us, is but dead before God. Even as a picture is but a dead representation of the thing itself, so be the works of all unfaithful (unbelieving) persons before God. They be but shadows of lively good things, and not good things indeed. For true faith doth give life to the works, and without faith no work is good before God.—We must set no good works before faith, nor think that before faith a man may do any good works. For such are as the course of a horse that runneth out of the way, which taketh great labour, but to no purpose.”†

Such is the confidence Mr. W. has, in the “*Experience of the unlettered sectarist*,” that he considers the whole “As satisfactory and consistent as the idle tales once so prevalent among the credulous and superstitious, of spectres and apparitions.”‡ He should have recollected, that there are some very important points of difference. In the first instance, they were the “*credulous and superstitious*,” who listened to “the idle tales once so prevalent, of spectres and apparitions;” but Methodism, or the Sectarists, if Mr. W. pleases, can bring forward men who have carefully examined every step they have taken in religion, and who are no way distinguished for their superstition. It may be further added, that the *effects*, as well as the *spectres* themselves, *soon disappeared*; but here is “permanent character” produced, men who have adorned the doctrine of God their

* Art. xiii.

† Homily on Faith, part iii.

‡ Page 54.

Saviour upwards of half a century. Lastly, they were only the *few* who professed to have *seen* these *spectres*, however many might have believed in them; but here are living epistles, seen and read of all men, with the exception of Mr. W. and two or three more.

The doctrine of *sanctification* meets with powerful opposition from Mr. W.; and no wonder, when he informs us, that "We find no instance on record of a single individual, even among the *Apostles* and primitive martyrs, who is represented as having arrived at entire *exemption from sin*;"* and maintains that men are only *perfect in a relative sense*,† that is, not *really* so,—possessing the name without the *thing specified*. A doctrine like this must be very agreeable to such as are in love with moral evil. It is not my intention, Sir, immediately to vindicate the character of the *Apostles* from the aspersion thrown upon it; I leave that office to their writings, particularly to the writings of him who says, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not;—and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."‡ There are two or three particulars relative to the doctrine impugned, and the views of the Methodists of that doctrine, which require briefly to be noticed. Mr. W. observes, 1. That the Methodists hold such a degree of *sanctification* "As to exempt them altogether from the actual, if not the *possible*, commission of sin, during the remainder of their life." 2. That sanctification "Is regarded as a qualification absolutely indispensable, preparatory to their reception into future glory." And, 3. That in them it is no less than "Presumption to pronounce with dogmatism, that without its attainment salvation is utterly hopeless."§

On the first of these, from a want of proof on the part of Mr. W. a bare denial is all that it merits. But it shall receive better treatment. Mr. Wesley, in a letter to Mr. Dodd, says, "I every where allow, that a child of God *can* and *will* commit sin, *if he does not keep himself*. 'But this, you say, is nothing to the present argument.' Yes, it is the whole

* Page 59.

† Page 58.

‡ 1 John iii. 6, 24.

§ Page 55-87.

thing. If they *keep themselves* they do not, otherwise they *can* and *do*, commit sin. I say nothing contrary to ~~this~~ in either Sermon. But, 'hence you say, we conclude, *That he who is born of God may possibly commit sin.*' An idle conclusion as ever was formed. For whoever denied it? I flatly affirm it in both the Sermons, and in the very paragraph now before us. The only conclusion which I deny is, That 'all Christians *do and will commit sin as long as they live.*'* He goes still further, and states his belief, that persons *perfected in love may make shipwreck of the faith.*† For his more enlarged views on the subject, you, Sir, as the *Editor* of the last edition of his Works, will naturally advert to his "Serious Thoughts on the Perseverance of the Saints."‡ To place man in such a degree of perfection in this world, as to raise him above the *possibility* of falling, is to elevate him above Adam in his paradisiacal state, and is every way incompatible with a state of probation.

As it regards the second particular, the Methodists consider themselves in possession of sufficient ground for its support. They do hold *sanctification* indispensably necessary to a person's admission into heaven. They view a salvation from sin as the *object of Christ's death*,—"He was wounded for our transgressions—bruised for our iniquities—delivered for our offences—and bare our sins in his own body on the tree:"§ they behold it as *attainable*; not only because "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," but because God has solemnly promised to cleanse us from *all* our filthiness, and to save us from *all* our uncleanness:|| and lastly, they urge it as *necessary*; because, *without holiness* no man shall see the Lord, and because the glorified saints in heaven have all "Washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."¶ This, Sir, includes the third particular which I purposed noticing; for if not any thing that is *unholy* can enter heaven, I contend

* Works, vol. xv. p. 341.

† Page 87.

‡ Vol. xiv. page 412-438.

§ Isai. liii. 5; Rom. iv. 25; 1 Pet. ii. 24.

|| 1 John i. 7; Ezek.

xxvi. 25, 28.

¶ Heb. xii. 14; Rev. vii. 14.

that there can be no *presumption* to pronounce even with dogmatism, that, without *entire sanctification*, final happiness is "utterly hopeless." For further reasons, I again refer you to Mr. Wesley's Works.*

Mr. W. anticipating an objection to which he seems afraid he will be laid open, asks of a person laying claim to the inspiration of the Spirit, "Are we to admit that it would be a satisfactory answer to those who might feel disposed to dispute his claims, to say, that they were absolutely incompetent judges of the case, since they never had shared in the same privilege?"† Such persons, it is readily acknowledged, may be competent judges in what relates to the arts and sciences—civil life—moral conduct, &c. but in what relates to the operations of the Holy Ghost, they are utterly incompetent to decide. Some have treated admirably of painting, who never excelled in the use of the pencil. Cicero could remark that Aratus, by the common consent of the learned, wrote excellently of the heavens and of the stars, though no noted astronomer. Many have delivered lectures on eloquence, who were not remarkable as orators. Galen, that great master of physic, wrote learnedly on the subject, though seldom seen in the practice. Some of our best treatises on poetry, have been penned by men who never shone in the art. And not a few have descanted on military tactics, who never entered the field. All this is within the range of reason, and of extensive knowledge. But, Sir, the case in dispute, is properly an exempt one. It was considered as such by St. Paul, who positively affirms, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.‡"

You will excuse this long letter: but really, Sir, where the very vitals of Christianity are wounded, it is difficult to compress the subject. In my next, in which I purpose taking up the subject of *Providence*, I promise, if that will be any consolation, to be more brief.—Your's,

JAMES EVERETT.

* Particularly vol. vi. p. 329--334.

† Page 52.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

LETTER III.

“ Providence comes forth to meet mankind,
In various modes of emphasis and awe.”—YOUNG.

REV. SIR,

In my last, the Bible was stated to be the grand standard of appeal; which statement was supported by express declarations of Scripture. Dependant upon this, it was assumed as a fact, that whatever *coincidences* are now met with,—whatever *similarity of effect* is visible in the intellectual, moral, and political world, with things recorded in the *Sacred Writings*, we are justified in ascribing them to the same *cause*; in saying, especially as it regards Christian experience, and remarkable occurrences of Providence—this is the work of God. Mr. W. on the contrary, informs his readers, that the witness of the Spirit, with some other Christian doctrines, belonged to the members of the primitive church, and that an extraordinary Providence terminated with the age of miracles. The first of these subjects was dismissed in what I lately forwarded to you; and I am happy, Sir, that, in the course of discussion, an opportunity was afforded me, of vindicating the doctrines of the Church of England, —a church to which the Methodists owe much, to which they are actually indebted, under God, for their religious existence. The subject of Providence shall now occupy our attention.

Perhaps it is not too much to affirm, Sir, that Providence is the same, in a general way, in every age. Indeed, if God acts, taking Mr. W. on his own ground, by *general laws*, it must be the case; for the same general laws must be carried through every dispensation, whether patriarchal, Mosaic, prophetic, or Christian. A careful observer must see a substantial harmony of providence with providence. Were this not the fact, to what purpose are the dispensations of God in former, recommended to the serious reflection of after ages? In a passage, part of which has

been already cited, the apostle reminds us of this duty: "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."* Now, Sir, to what end, I again demand; are these extraordinary providences of *judgment* and *mercy*, as the consequence of *obedience* and *disobedience*, left upon record, if not for our advantage! Surely, if Providence has a hand to work, and a tongue to speak, in this unusual way, man should have an eye to see, and an ear to hear. It is the wisdom of every human being to inquire into that which most intimately concerns him, the *end* of all the dispensations of God: and yet, to proceed no further than bare *inquiry*, would be injudicious and dangerous; since a *holy conformity* to the will of God should be the result of every inquiry. To know *this*, or *that*, to be the design of the Supreme Being, in any dispensation, and not to accede to it; is to render us doubly criminal.

That I may not mistake my way, Sir, in the discussion of a subject professedly so intricate, as that of Providence, I purpose to proceed, as I have commenced, with the Sacred Writings as my guide. Under the tuition of the Word of God, we may humbly expect to make no small proficiency in the school of Providence. It may be permitted to decide on a question of this nature the more readily, first, because it alone is capable of *unravelling* various *difficulties*. Very often, a parallel case, (of which a little more in due time,) or something by way of implication, is con-

* 1 Cor. x. 6—11.

tained in the Bible, which throws a blaze of light on some of the darkest dispensations. This emboldens us to ask, "Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time which was before us."* The Scriptures are the more necessary, secondly, because it is from an ignorance of them that the *perplexity*, and consequent *distress*, which numbers experience, relative to the Divine dispensations, originates. The man that mistakes a promise, will be disposed to dispute with Providence. Faith is not unfrequently called in, to allay the dust which has been raised by sense and reason: hence we find the perturbation excited in the bosom of the royal prophet, terminating in a calm, "Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen and amen."† Lastly, the Sacred Records may be urged, because the want of a proper acquaintance with them, is one grand cause why the Providence of God is so seldom *improved*. The very dispensation which should open the eye, actually closes it. Thus, Ahab charges the troubles of Israel upon Elijah; whereas, if he had taken the torch of the word in his hand, and entered the cave of Obadiah; he might have seen the ejected prophets,—a sight which would have soon enabled him to determine who was the troubler of Israel. How necessary then is it, to adhere,—yes, rigidly to adhere, to "The Book!"—for "The commandment of God is pure, enlightning the eyes."‡

Important as the doctrine of Providence is, I am far from considering it of equal magnitude with that of *grace*. To men, whose principal enjoyments are limited to this life, it will be stamped with all the importance which Mr. W. is desirous of attaching to it, who, after enlarging on the doctrines of grace, observes, "Among the conspicuous tenets of the same party, there remains to be considered a topic of still greater interest, and one which merits an ampler discussion than is consistent with the limits of the present remarks; I mean the views which the Methodists, and many

* Eccles. i. 10.

† Psalm lxxxix. 52.

‡ Psalm xix. 8.

other Christians agreeing with them in this particular, entertain respecting the doctrine of a *Divine Providence*.* You, Sir, as one who has participated in the original defection of our nature, will hesitate to pronounce Providence "of still *greater interest*" than grace—than the restoration of man to the image of God. The former can never accomplish this: and as the latter alone can effect it, it ought to have the pre-eminence, as the most important in its results. Creation itself, in the estimation of an excellent writer, sinks in the comparison;—"Twas great to speak a world from nought,—'tis greater to redeem." It will be necessary, for the sake of perspicuity, to explain the terms connected with the subject in dispute. What, then, are we to understand by a *general Providence*? Mr. W. in the language of certain individuals, explains it thus; "They believe that when the world was originally called into existence, its omnipotent Creator framed and established a system of laws suited to its preservation, and sufficient for executing the purposes of his wisdom, without his aid or intervention, to the end of time."† To men who proceed no further than this, it is just to observe, that Mr. W. very properly objects; and as his rejection of the doctrines accords with the views of every Christian, amplification is unnecessary.

On the subject of a *particular Providence*, there is manifestly a difference of sentiment between Mr. W. and the Methodists. "We," says he, in opposition to the above, "who profess the religion of Christ, are firmly persuaded that the agency of the Deity is immediately extended to all his works; that he superintends the concerns of his creatures with never-ceasing vigilance; and that as the exertion of his power was necessary for our creation, it is not less so for our preservation and protection. So intimate, indeed, do we believe the connexion to be between the Giver and receiver of organized life, that the latter cannot subsist for a moment without the vivifying support of the former. But though the truth of

* Page 61.

† Page 62.

a particular Providence, is alike satisfactorily established by the reasonings of philosophy and the express declarations of the inspired writings, it is not less true, that the Almighty has chosen that the execution of his will shall be effected by the instrumentality of *general laws* and *secondary causes*. Nor shall we find that these laws have ever been suspended, or that the controlling energy of the Divine Being was ever rendered more than ordinary visible, except when the happiness of the human species required his special interposition, and when the utility of the effect was fully commensurate with the dignity of the cause.* Here, you will perceive, Sir, God is *extending his agency to all his works*,—is *superintending the concerns of his creatures*,—is *exerting his power for their preservation and protection*. All this, however, is *effected by the instrumentality of general laws and secondary causes*, and refers, not to a part, but to the *whole* of God's creation. Where, on this statement, is that *immediate agency of God*, of which Mr. W. speaks, if it be effected by *secondary causes*? And where the *particularity* of the case, if it *equally* extends to the *whole*, and is produced by *general laws*? This is what Christians very properly denominate a *general providence*. These *laws*, it is further remarked, are *never suspended*, and this *agency* was *never* "more than *ordinary visible*, except when the happiness of the human species required his special interposition, and when the utility of the effect was fully commensurate with the dignity of the cause." In another part of his work, his definition of a particular, bears all the characteristics of a general Providence.†

Having stated Mr. W.'s views of a Divine Providence, I shall now proceed to the creed of the Methodists on the subject, and vindicate it against the aspersions with which it is loaded.

You are aware, Sir, that Mr. Wesley, from the improper use made of it, entertained a particular antipathy to the phrase, "*A general Providence*;" at least, this is what I deduce

* Page 62, 63.

† Page 77.

from different passages in his writings.* And really, upon the whole, the world, I am inclined to believe, would sustain no great injury, if it were banished from its conversation; I mean, when men would introduce it in contradistinction to a particular Providence, and with a view to destroy the existence of the latter. Since, however, a general Providence is maintained, a Methodist would consider it as including, in reference to *man*, not barely that act by which God *upholds* his creatures in a state of *simple being*,† but by which he *preserves* them in a state of *well-being*, supplying their numerous and returning wants.‡ Upon this too, it is unnecessary to enlarge, being fully admitted by Mr. Wainewright.

By a *particular Providence*, the Methodists do not only mean, that the Creator of the world feeds and protects the *many*, in *particular emergencies*, but that, in *some cases*, though by *secondary* causes, he attends to the *few*—to the *individual*, exclusive of the many. An excellent distinction is made by an old writer, of which Mr. Wesley has made the best use,§ and which will help to explain the views of the Methodist body on the subject. He represents a three-fold circle of Divine Providence, over and above that which presides over the whole universe. Mr. Wesley's remarks on it are as follow: "The *outermost circle* includes the whole race of mankind, all the descendants of Adam, all the human creatures that are dispersed over the face of the earth. This comprises, not only the Christian world, those that name the name of Christ, but the Mahometans also, who considerably out-number even the nominal Christians: yea, and the Heathens likewise, who very far out-number the Mahometans and Christians put together. 'Is he the God of the Jews,' says the apostle, 'and not of the Gentiles also?' And so we may say, Is he the God of the Christians, and not of the Mahometans and Heathens? Yea, doubtless of the

* Vol. ix. p. 289; Vol. xii. p. 174; Vol. viii. p. 178. † Nehem. ix. 6; Job xxxiii. 4; Psalm civ. 30; Acts xvii. 28. ‡ Psalm cv. 37; Psalm cxliv. 12—14; Matt. v. 45; Acts xiv. 17. § Vol. ix. p. 285.

Mahometans and Heathens also? His love is not confined : 'The Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works.' He careth for the very outcasts of men. Yet it may be admitted, that he takes more immediate care of those that are comprised in the *second*, the *smaller circle* : which includes all that are called Christians, all that profess to believe in Christ. We may reasonably think that these, in some degree, honour him, at least more than the Heathens do: God does, likewise, in some measure, honour them, and has a nearer concern for them. By many instances it appears, that the prince of this world has not so full power over these as over the Heathens. The God whom they even profess to serve, does, in some measure, maintain his own cause. So that the evil spirits do not reign so uncontrolled over them, as they do over the Heathen world. Within the *third*, the *innermost circle*, are contained only the real Christians: those that worship God, not in form only, but in spirit and in truth. Herein are comprised all that love God, or at least, truly fear God and work righteousness. All in whom is the mind which was in Christ, and who walk as Christ also walked. The words of our Lord peculiarly refer to these. It is to these, in particular, that he says, 'Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.' Nothing relative to these is too great, nothing too little for his attention. He has his eye continually, as upon every individual person that is a member of his family, so upon every circumstance that relates either to their souls or bodies, either to their inward or outward state, wherein either their present or eternal happiness is in any degree concerned." It is in the last sense, Sir, that the Methodists often interpret a particular providence; and it is in this sense I wish to be understood, when I affirm, that God often attends to the *few* —to the *individual*, exclusive of the *many*.* The multitude

* The Methodists are not the only persons, whose views coincide with those of the writer quoted by Mr. Wesley. A venerable Prelate of the Establishment inculcates the same sentiment. "If your Father's Providence," says he, referring to the pious, "be so critical about the small concerns"

have their share of the Divine attention, and their portion of the Divine blessings; but there is a sense in which the devout are more immediately interested in God's love and care, and to whom these words are peculiarly applicable, "Them that honour me, I will honour." But mark what follows, "They that despise me shall be LIGHTLY ESTEEMED."*

Though I am no *Calvinist*, as it respects Human Redemption, I confess myself rather Calvinistic in Providence; and much may be said in support of the *Providential Calvinism*, or, perhaps, more properly *Miltonianism*, included in the sentiments expressed on the three-fold circle. Human reason may enter her protest against the Supreme Being, as she is wont to do,† for making a distinction, and not embracing all in the innermost circle; but whatever may be her objections against the inequalities of Providence, the discoveries of the Divine proceedings in the Scriptures should be decisive. The supreme reason why the condition of one creature should be superior to another, can alone, in many instances, be resolved into the will of God. Man himself, without the slightest charge of severity, is perfectly at liberty to dispose of the brute creation as he judges most expedient; some for the plough, and some for other purposes. Were he, therefore, to object to the prerogative of his Maker, he would maintain a right which he actually denied to another. Nor must it be forgotten, that men exclude themselves from the privilege of a position in the inner circle. It is not because they cannot, but because they will not enter. The man who is warned of danger, but heedlessly proceeds till the assassin darts from his dark retreat, has his own perversity to blame. Or the person, who is indisposed, but refuses to attend to the remedy prescribed, though he dies, his death may be as much attributed to his *stupidity* as to the *disease*. It is not presumed, however, that the favoured few who are more

even of sparrows: *fear not ye, for ye are of more value than many sparrows; yea of MORE VALUE than MANY MEN.*" Hopkins's Works. Vol. iv. p. 234, octavo edition, by Pratt.

* 1 Sam. ii. 30.

† Rom. ix. 18.

immediately the objects of Divine care, will have their path decorated with flowers—will enjoy an exemption from the losses, the afflictions of life. No, Sir; there are a variety of ways in which God steps forward to the aid of these, under the severest exercises, while the wicked are frequently abandoned to themselves, or, in his own language, “lightly esteemed.”

If Mr. Wainewright will insist upon the Methodists using the phrase—an *extraordinary Providence*, as distinct from a *particular* one, they would probably define it thus, viz. That which is either *extremely rare* in its occurrence—*unaccountable* in its nature, but evidently marked as an immediate interposition of God—or highly *important* in its results, whether it regards *religion* or *human life*. Mr. W. admits that the Jews were under “an extraordinary Providence,”* but contends, as you have seen, Sir, that it “ceased with the age of miracles.”† In support of the last member of the sentence, we have, to use his own words in the case of the Methodists, only “confident assertions.” There are three rocks on which he seems to split, and which it will be prudent to remove, to prevent further injury.

First, he establishes a *necessary* connection between an extraordinary Providence and the *introduction* of religion —“the *revelations* of the *Divine will* from the *patriarchal age* to the *advent* of Christ,”‡ as though it were not equally necessary during its *establishment*. Admitting the solidity of this, for the sake of argument, Christianity has yet to be *introduced* among the heathen, to whom it is perfectly *novel*. We plead for no miracles—for no extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; yet the bare preaching of the word will not be sufficient evidence for their conviction—that they ought to embrace the gospel. The *power* of God must accompany it. This is it,—its power to the *heart*, which constitutes its evidence, that it is Divine. And though a completely established religion, though revelation received the finishing hand hundreds of years ago, no man can read the hair-breadth

* Page 67-8.

† Page 64.

‡ Page 63.

escapes of pious Missionaries, without seeing extraordinary interpositions of God, unless he be among that class of people who "have eyes but see not." It is true, Mr. W. admits that when Judaism was an established religion, the Jews, nevertheless, had God's *visible* displays in providence.* But though Judaism was not only *introduced*, but *perpetuated*, by signs and wonders, he strangely *confines* every thing of an *extraordinary* nature to the *first propagation* of the *gospel*: he carries *through* one dispensation, that which terminates with the *commencement* of the other. The *Old Testament*, it will be conceded, is properly a *history* of God's dealings with his *church*, and with the *world*, in which is recorded his continual interposition, by way of judgment or mercy, according to their moral conduct or behaviour. And will it be denied, Sir, that the *New Testament*, as a whole, contains on the other hand, a *history* of the *primitive Christian Church*; while the *Apocalypse* in particular, furnishes us with an account of God's dealings with that *Church*, and with the *world*, to the end of time? In the book of Revelation, the most *extraordinary* things are recorded, many of which, according to our best chronologists, historians, and commentators, have actually taken place, while others, equally *extraordinary*, have yet to be accomplished. To notice but one, it must be an *extraordinary Providence*, that will bring the Jews to their own land; and an *extraordinary* display of the *power* of *Divine grace*, that will bring them to a profession of Christianity. If "an extraordinary Providence ceased with the age of miracles," what extraordinary Providence, now that miracles have ceased, preserves them a *distinct people*? With the *Apocalypse* before us, an extraordinary Providence meets us full in the front, in every direction. "The book of the *Apocalypse*," says Dr. Adam Clarke, "may be considered as a *PROPHET* continued in the church of God, uttering predictions relative to all times, which have their successive fulfilment as ages roll on; and

thus it stands in the Christian church in the place of the succession of PROPHETS in the Jewish church; and by this especial economy PROPHECY is STILL CONTINUED, is ALWAYS SPEAKING; and yet a succession of prophets rendered unnecessary." Is it not fair to infer, Sir, that what was necessary under the *establishment* of one religion—the Jewish, and of one people—the people of God, is equally requisite for the well-being of the other? We behold the same God—the same church, though under different names, and in different dispensations—the religion of both established—the people equally dear to God—equally exposed as creatures. Considering the subject thus, it is impossible to yield assent to the declaration of Mr. W. where he remarks, "That signal instances of the Divine interposition have occurred in distant ages, and on occasions involving consequences of general concern, cannot be allowed to justify the conclusion that similar cases exist in the present condition of mankind."* It will be difficult to give weight to any argument which goes to prove, that the same extraordinary Providence, *continued* through the *whole* of one dispensation, should not be continued through the dispensation succeeding; especially when the moving cause, the reason, and the necessity of the case, are the same. This may be deemed presumptive evidence, at least, in favour of its perpetuity.

Secondly, Mr. Wainewright improperly associates an extraordinary Providence with *miracles*, as though necessarily connected, or in any wise dependent upon each other; and hence affirms, that, since miracles have ceased, "we have no authority for expecting its revival before the dissolution of the world."† Thus, Sir, whatever reveries we may indulge ourselves in respecting an extraordinary Providence in another world, we are to abandon ourselves to despair relative to any thing of the kind "*before the dissolution*" of *this*. So strong is the colouring in which Mr. W. paints the subject before us, that the Methodists would be afraid of its

* Page 76-77.

† Page 64.

adoption; and it is apparently depicted thus, either with a view to prevent their future use of it, or for the purpose of rendering them ridiculous. Let them explain their own meaning, and not any thing objectionable will appear. What is Mr. W.'s definition of an extraordinary Providence? "A marked deviation from the usual course of these general laws," that is, the general laws of nature.* And what is a miracle? The general opinion is, that it is "An extraordinary operation of God, against the known course, and settled laws of nature, appealing to the senses."† Where then is the difference between Mr. W.'s extraordinary Providence and a miracle?‡ Though he speaks particularly of God's government over man, yet he does not confine himself to it; but extends his remarks to "the constant *energy* of the Supreme Being, *exerted* throughout *every part* of his *works*, and never withheld even for a moment from the

* Page 77.

† Fleetwood on Miracles, p. 2.

‡ An infidel of some celebrity has nearly made the same mistake, relative to *occasional* or extraordinary interpositions of Providence, only positively affirming them to be miracles. "Such," says he, "they would be strictly, whether they were contrary to the established course of nature or not; for the miracle consists in the extraordinary interposition, as much as in the nature of the thing brought to pass: That the miracle would be as real in the one case as the other: and the reality might be made evident enough by the occasion, by the circumstance, by the repetition of it on similar occasions, in similar circumstances; and, above all, by this circumstance, that the assumed particular Providence was a direct answer to particular prayers and acts of devotion offered up to procure it."—Bollingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 458, 459.

The principal difference between Mr. W. and Bollingbroke seems to lie in the *design*; the one confounding them, perhaps innocently, and the other wickedly. Leland's reply to his Lordship is short, but explicit. "Here he takes upon him to give a new and arbitrary definition of a miracle. Though a thing hath nothing in it contrary to the established course of nature, yet it is to be regarded as a miracle, if there be supposed to be any special agency of the Divine Providence in it, suited to particular occasions and circumstances; and, above all, if it be supposed to come in answer to prayer. But if the occasional interpositions he refers to, be perfectly agreeable to the general laws of nature and of Providence, and be only special applications of general laws to particular occasions, I do not see how they can be properly said to be miraculous at all; or how their being supposed to come in answer to prayer can make them so."—View of Deistical Writers, vol. i. p. 467, 468.

minutest and the most insignificant objects of his *creation* ;” and considers an extraordinary Providence, “a marked deviation from the usual course of these general laws.”* Now, Sir, the Methodistical definition of an extraordinary Providence, which I trust I have hit upon, makes the distinction between it and a miracle, obvious to every discerning mind. If the two subjects be so distinct, what necessity is there, as intimated by Mr. W. in the same page, for “the powerful evidence of miracles” as a support? Where is the necessity of miracles in this instance? Is not an extraordinary Providence itself an *appeal to the senses*? a case in which God speaks to the eye and the ear? In the case of any doctrine purely speculative, the propriety of miracles is at once apparent; because in that instance, there is an appeal made to one sense for the conviction of another; or, in other words, an appeal to the *eye* for the conviction of the *mind*. But here it is otherwise; for God intends, by every remarkable Providence, to render his agency strikingly visible to man. Should the interposition be so dubious as to render a miracle necessary to produce conviction, it immediately destroys the right of that Providence to the epithet *extraordinary*.† What is *extraordinary* must be *convincing*; or, at least, accomplish its end in the hand of God.

Thirdly, In the views of Mr. W. an extraordinary Providence is confined to *religion alone*, while any separate portion of its *possessors* are denied as its objects. “By an extraordinary Providence,” says he, “we understand a marked deviation from the usual course of these general laws, for effecting some design of the highest concern, not to the prosperity of individuals, or the interests of a party, but to the advancement of the only true religion, and the ultimate

* Page 77.

† Though both an extraordinary Providence, and miracles, may be considered as an appeal to the same senses, it may be argued that the latter carries a higher degree of evidence for the satisfaction of the spectator, than the former. This will be allowed in a Methodist, but not in Mr. W.’s case, because his extraordinary Providence approaches so near to miracle as to render the evidence almost the same.

felicity of the human species." This, he further states, "can, from its very nature, but rarely occur."* To the last sentiment few will be found unreasonable enough to object. Still, however, Mr. W. has to prove, that an extraordinary Providence never occurs to the *few*—that it is only exerted where "the *advancement of religion*" is concerned—and that it cannot retain its character as *extraordinary*, unless it affect the *whole* "human species." Whether a fact passes before the eyes of an individual, or of millions of individuals, the *fact itself* still preserves its identity. The *effects* produced are more extensive in the last, than in the first instance; but, that only refers to the *persons* who behold, and not to the *object* contemplated.—I ask, Sir, Was not the *Sabbatical year* an *extraordinary Providence*? "Six years," it is said, "thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard."† That God intended to teach them the doctrine of *Providence* by this ordinance, may be fairly deduced from another part of the Sacred Writings, where it is distinctly marked: "And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase; then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years."‡ That is, as a writer observes, there shall be, not *three* crops in *one* year, but *one* crop, equal in its abundance to *three*, because it must supply the wants of three years. 1. For the *sixth* year, supplying fruit for its own consumption. 2. For the *seventh* year, in which they were neither to sow nor reap. And 3. For the *eighth*, for though they ploughed and sowed that year, yet a whole course of its seasons was requisite to bring all these fruits to perfection, so that they could not have the fruits of the *eighth* year till the *ninth*,—till which time God

* Page 77-8.

† Exod. xxiii. 10, 11.

‡ Lev. xxv. 20, 21.

promised that they should *eat of the old store*.^{*} With such a display of the special Providence of God before their eyes, as the Sabbatical year afforded, we should be led to imagine that scarcely an infidel would be found in the land. That this providence was *extraordinary*, will be readily admitted; and that it militates against the scheme of Mr. W. will appear to all who duly consider the subject. Though the Jews were obedient to the institution of God, the Sabbatical year referred *alone* to their *temporal* prosperity, and was as much abstracted from their religion, as the *farming* concerns of a clergyman, or any private member of the Establishment, are abstracted from his *religious belief* and *professions*. Nor was it even connected with “the *advancement* of the only true *religion*” among *neighbouring nations*; but merely for “the *interests* of a *party*,”—a party of Jews, comprising a very *small portion* of “the *human species*.” Should it be remarked, that it was for “the *advancement* of the only true religion” among the Jews themselves, it might be replied with equal propriety, that as the Jews were actually in possession of the true religion, there was not any thing in their case, which will not equally establish the *necessity* of an extraordinary Providence, to promote the interests of religion among those who are already in possession of Christianity.

The difference between an *ordinary* and an *extraordinary* Providence is a point explicitly stated in the Word of God. It is an ordinary Providence that preserves the heavenly bodies in their orbits, the earth in her revolutions, a nation from destruction, and that appoints the preaching of the gospel as the method of bringing sinners to the Saviour.[†] On the contrary, it was an extraordinary Providence that sent Joseph into Egypt, and that brought St. Paul to a knowledge of the truth.[‡] Providence is also distinguished as immediate and mediate. In the first instance God excludes the interposition of those means, which, on other occasions, he

^{*} Lev. xxv, 22. [†] Psalm xix. 4, 5, 6; Jerem. xxxi. 35, 36, 37; Rom. x. 17.

[‡] Gen. xlv. 5; Acts ix. 3, 4, 5.

employs; as when he himself preached to Adam, and supported the life of Moses, without the use of the creatures.* In the second instance, instruments are employed, as the heavens and the earth, for corn, wine, and oil; and those instruments are destined for particular ends, as the figs for the restoration of Hezekiah's health, and the angel, who, unwilling to execute the work of the apostle, requested Cornelius to send for Simon Peter.†

To confine the Divine Being within the boundaries of an ordinary Providence, is what we have no authority to do, from the Scriptures. Such a path, in fact, is too contracted, for the infinitely wise and gracious Governor of the universe. He is not, as has been intimated, confined to *instruments*. Though the assassin, as an instrument of Divine wrath, desists from launching his vengeance at Nabal, the Lord smites him, and he dies.‡ Let agents the most unpromising appear upon the stage, it will not prevent God, either in temporal or spiritual matters, from producing effects proportionate to causes the most mighty. He has even "chosen the foolish things of this world, to confound the wise.§" Do *occasions* present themselves to notice? These in the hand of God, shall cease to exert their influence. We listen to the Ephraimites, while censuring Gideon, for not summoning them to battle when he engaged in a contest with the Midianites;|| yet their severe upbraidings did not produce the same effects, which, on another occasion, they produced, when, instead of calling forth a vote of thanks, they terminated in the death of "forty and two thousand" Ephraimites.¶ Are *means* required? These, though simple, and often invisible, are at hand. "Ye shall not, says Elisha to the distracted kings," see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye and your cattle, and your beasts."** Or, supposing the means to appear, they promise nothing either

* Gen. iii. 9; Exod. xxxiv. 28.

† Isai. xxxviii. 21; Acts x. 5, 6.

‡ 1 Sam. xxv. 38.

§ 1 Cor. i. 27.

|| Judges viii. 1, 2.

¶ Chap. xii. 1—6.

** 2 Kings iii. 17.

to the eye or the mind. "Are not Abana, Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean?"* It is possible they are much superior, but Jordan's streams are to cleanse the leper. If *opportunities* for action are favourable, they avail little while they remain under the interdict of Providence. David enters the camp of Saul, and finds him asleep; but he injures not the monarch; he only carries off his spear and his cruse of water, and preserves them as testimonies of his loyalty.† Also, in the case of the Jews and our Saviour: "Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves, for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me."‡ You, Sir, will be the last to ask what bearing this can have upon the subject of an extraordinary Providence in the present day; because history has furnished you with not a few of such instances, while personal observation has supplied you with others.

Great stress is laid by Mr. W. on *secondary* causes. "The Almighty has chosen," he observes, "that the execution of his will shall be effected by the instrumentality of *general* laws and *secondary* causes."§ The Methodists, though far from denying this, are apprised that persons may look too much at *secondary* causes. This was the error into which Zacharias fell. Not considering the power of God, he forgot for the moment, that nature, though stricken in years, was at the command of Omnipotence. Should we find, therefore, things apparently as unlikely recorded in Scripture, as that Zacharias and Elizabeth, in their old age, should have a son, we are not to encourage incredulity, but to view the subject in connection with the power of God. Thus we are taught in the Sacred Records. Instance the case of the Jews, who have been plunged into the depths of wretchedness for centuries: yet "God is able to graff them in again."|| In all other difficult cases, we ought to recollect the language of God himself to Abraham; "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?"¶

* 2 Kings. v. 12.

† 1 Sam. xxiv. 11.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 55.

§ Page 63.

|| Rom. xi. 23.

¶ Gen. xviii. 14.

Providence frequently, in its extraordinary operations, rises superior to the reason of second causes. "When the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."* Earthquakes may be accounted for on philosophical principles; but it is the divine, not the philosopher, who is to be the interpreter here. Few errors are more prevalent among a certain class of men, than those which make second causes *sole* causes, by denying the agency of the first. Not a few there are, who will rather ascribe the general deluge to an extraordinary concourse of "watery planets;" and the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, to their inconsiderate rashness in venturing on a high tide, than to the Divine displeasure on account of sin. Whatever false reasonings men may adopt, to hide from public view the hand of Providence, the Bible teaches a different lesson. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is attributed to God, as the righteous governor of the world; and yet there are some who impute that visible desolation to a contingency of second causes. Remote, however, is such imputation to the sentiments of the inspired writers, who every where represent the arm of God as falling in vengeance upon those places.† In like manner, though there are frequently storms in the Mediterranean, on which sea the disobedient prophet sailed, there is no reason to deny the hand of Providence in his voyage; for it is remarked, "The Lord sent out a great wind into the sea."‡ By not distinguishing between a *permissive* and a *compulsive* Providence,§ though we see the instrument employed in chastising or blessing, we are apt to lose sight of its more immediate *cause*, and to attribute that to God *remotely*, in the order of nature, which belongs to a *particular occasion*, and would not have happened but for

* Matt. xxvii. 54.

† Gen. xix. 24, 25; Deut. xxix. 23; 2 Pet. ii. 6.

‡ Jonah i. 4.

§ I speak in reference to inanimate matter as the instrument *compelled*, which preserves the free-agency of man inviolate.

the obedience or disobedience of man.* According to this distinction, even in the case of secondary causes, we view the Divine Governor of the world *near*, or at a *distance*, in his operation. We also guard against a misconception of secondary causes, in relation to the subject governed; not attributing that to the regular order of Providence, of which the transgression of the creature has been the *first* or moving cause.

An occasional glance at *first causes*, will strengthen our confidence in Providence. He that made the world without a tool, can work without an instrument. Though no human arm appears to crush the power of Laban, the hand of heaven is on the alert to restrain him; "It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your fathers spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad."† The blast of the rams-horns proves as destructive to the walls of Jericho, as if they had been exploded with so many barrels of gunpowder. When God is present, the fire burns, but without injuring the three pious Hebrews; the hungry lions are restrained from devouring Daniel; the cruel gaoler treats the apostles with tenderness.‡ The same power is on the throne, and the pious are equally the objects of its care.

That God has ceased to exert his power, exercise his wisdom, and display his mercy, is a doctrine, as you will have perceived, Sir, which occupies no part of the creed of Mr. W. But, though Divine power still operates, it is unknown to man, how, when, and where it operates in any other than a general way; or, in the language of Mr. W. "The controlling energy of the Divine Being was never rendered more than *ordinarily visible*," except in cases of the

* Saurin remarks, "To refer events to second causes, not recognizing the designated visitations of Providence by the plague, by war, and famine; and under a presumption, that these proceed from the general laws of nature, not perceiving the Author and Lord of nature, is to have a spirit of blindness." Sermons, Vol. viii. p. 163.

† Gen. xxxi. 29.

‡ Dan. iii. 6; chap. vi. 22, 23; Acts xvi. 23—25.

§ Page 63.

utmost magnitude,* all of which were included in an extraordinary Providence, which Providence terminated with the age of miracles, Providence can not only be demonstrated from the various attributes of Deity, but Providence itself is properly the exercise of the Divine perfections in the government of the world. Thus, Divine *power* is displayed in the wind, the sea, and the other elements;† Divine *mercy*, in the preservation of Joseph, Moses, David, and others; Divine *justice*, in the bears which came out of the wood and devoured the children;‡ Divine *wisdom*, in accomplishing, by a variety of contingencies, certain events, as in the case of Joseph, where every circumstance assisted to construct the bridge of Providence, over which his dreams might pass into the land of Egypt, for their completion; and Divine *truth*, in the various appointments of God, and predictions of the prophets. Hence, Saul is anointed by Samuel as captain of the inheritance of the Lord;§ and in due time, though Saul conceals himself,|| the lot finds him out. The land of Canaan too, was divided by lot,—a divisions corresponding with the prophecy of Jacob. As these perfections are not dormant, but always active, I trust I shall make it appear, not only that they are *visible* in their effects, but, on particular occasions, "*more than ordinarily visible*." If all the perfections of God conspire in contriving and executing the scheme of Providence; if God possess all these perfections in the utmost possible degree; then it follows, that all the dispensations of Providence are as holy, just, and good, as it is possible they should be,—and that, from the immutability of his nature, and the wretched state of man, there is the probability of a correspondency of procedure in every thing abstracted from miracles. He does not exercise *one* perfection exclusive of the rest, but *all*, without any exception. As the same reason why he does not exercise all, if this could be supposed, when all are equally necessary, will hold good that he cannot exercise any one of them.

* Page 63. † 2 Chron. xx. 37; Psalm cxlvii. 18. ‡ 2 Kings ii. 23, 24.

§ 1 Sam. x. 1.

|| Vet. 20—22.

the evil and the good.† It is very fortunate that
ferred to him, that the passages of Scripture which
others, belonged to the old world. For this
ly furnished with a reply; viz. that general
onfirm their application to present times. This,
tly admissible: but you are aware, that this is
nd on which we establish a Providence "*more*
ly visible," and "*a visible distinction*," in
acter. The Methodists, whose opinions he pre-
at, never affirm, as insinuated, "that worldly
necessarily attached to the observance" of
er with an exemption from the ills of life.‡ On
they know with the Psalmist, that the wicked
urish, while the righteous are depressed in
they know too, how to account for such dis-
ition. This, however, is far from operating, in
s, against an extraordinary Providence, or a
ion between the righteous and the wicked, in
wants and protecting the persons of the one,
g the disobedience of the other. Mr. W.
anted, that the Methodists hold the opinions
; and his remarks only go to prove, that *gene-*

† Pages 67—78.

‡ Pages 66, 69—71.

rally, the pious and the irreligious are subject to the fluctuations of *war, trade, and disease*. In this,—for who ever denied it? he only tilts at a phantom. He may be defied to produce a single passage from any of their standard works, that gives the smallest countenance to any such absurdity. On the authority of Mr. W. himself, we are warranted to state, that God “superintends the concerns of his creatures with never ceasing vigilance,” for their “*preservation and protection*.”* Than this, the Methodists require no more: and when they see *good men* preserved and protected in a remarkable manner, why not, if “the *agency* of the Deity is *immediately* extended to all his works,”† ascribe it to the Author of all our blessings? Here they are even supported by their opponent, who considers it the “*unquestionable duty*” of man “to ascribe his happiness to the goodness of the Deity;”‡ not barely, observe, his *spiritual*, but his *temporal* happiness. And what a felicity, to be *preserved* in danger, and *protected* from enemies! Reverse this, Sir, and apply it to punishment on the wicked, in the case “of *adverse circumstances or personal misfortune*.” This too, is to be viewed “as the appointment of a wise and righteous Governor of the world.”§ Now, as God never acts, humanly speaking, but from some *motive*, or for some *reason*, can there be any harm, provided *obedience* and *usefulness* connected with the person *preserved*, of considering his preservation in the light of a *reward*,|| and of intimating the probability of God having arisen out of his place to save him? or any evil, if the individual *suffering*, be extremely *wicked*, of viewing it as a *punishment*?¶ Preservations and deli-

*Page 62.

† Ibid.

‡ Page 76.

§ Page 76.

|| It is gratifying to have the support of eminent men in a cause like this. “God, by his governing Providence, *distributes rewards and punishments according to our actions*. And this part of his Providence is oftentimes remarkable, even in this *PRESENT LIFE*; when we see *retributions* of Divine mercy or vengeance, *signally proportioned* according to men’s demerits. Bishop Hopkins’s Works, Vol. iv. p. 237.

¶ Archbishop Tillotson, in his “Thanksgiving Sermon,” on Jer. ix. 23, 24, has the following remarks, which will perhaps have a little weight with

verances, are, to good men, proofs of God's love, and consequently *distinctive*. "By this," says David, "I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me."* Here the distinction is obvious between the enemy and the man of God; the one preserved, the other not suffered to triumph. Our Lord inculcates the same sentiment, and represents the preservation of the disciples as a thing opposed to the regular course of nature, and the ordinary proceedings of Providence. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves."† There is a great deal comprehended in an old saying,—The servants of God are immortal till their work is done. To deny a Providence of this nature, is no less than an encouragement to vice, and, in a less enlightened age, would open the way to Atheism. Only let this deep be broken up, and a deluge of ungodliness would immediately follow. What the apostle infers from a denial of the resurrection, would be one of the first uses of the doctrine, among men unacquainted with experimental religion; "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die:"

Mr. W. "The best knowledge of Religion, and that which is the foundation of all the rest, is the knowledge of the Divine nature and perfections: especially of those which are most proper for our imitation, and such are those mentioned in the text, *loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness*; which we may distinguish thus: *Loving-kindness* comprehends God's milder attributes, his *goodness*, and *mercy*, and *patience*: *judgment* signifies his severer dealings with men, whether in the chastisement of his people, or in the *remarkable PUNISHMENT of great OFFENDERS* for example and warning to others," &c. *Occass. Serm. Folio*, p. 388. He did not consider the *judgment* of God in the simple light of an "*appointment*," but a *punishment*; and a punishment too, for *great offences*.

* Psalm xli. 11.

† Matt. x. 16. Another quotation from Bishop Hopkins may not be unacceptable. "Were there no other argument," says he, "to prove that God governs the world, this would suffice, even, that his servants have been continually oppressed in it, yet never could be rooted out of it: though men and devils have combined together against them, and God (as they have complained) hath seemed to abandon them; yet such a fenceless and forlorn generation as this, hath been hitherto, and shall be preserved to the very end of the world: doth not this speak forth the power and care of Almighty God, thus to keep a bush unconsumed, in the midst of the flames? to preserve fuel untouched, in the very embraces of the flames?" *Works*, vol. iv. p. 243, 244.



but surely humanity, not to say Christianity, dictates very differently. Your own remarks on this subject, Sir, are judicious and scriptural. "Is it," you ask the editors of the *Christian Observer*, "not according to the highest reason and truest philosophy, to acknowledge a particular Providence watching over even every individual of the human race, and especially over such as are peculiarly dear to God? And what is there *unreasonable* in believing that he occasionally, at least, exerts his power for the deliverance and preservation of such? Indeed, if he did not exert his power for these purposes, what would his watching over them avail? What advantage would they derive from it, if still all events, how interesting soever, were left to chance and nature? And is it not *wise* and *prudent* to bear testimony to such interpositions of Providence at a time when *Atheism* and *Infidelity* go about, in various ways, to deny the Providence of God, and to deprive his people of the comfort of believing that 'the hairs of their head are all numbered,' that 'a sparrow falleth not to the ground without their heavenly Father;' and that they 'are of more value than many sparrows.'"*

Seasonable warnings are frequently given to nations and to individuals, and we are generally, when pious characters are concerned, enabled, from some circumstance or parallel case, to recognize the hand of God. However likely the means may be to accomplish an end, some sudden discovery mars the whole. Though the king of Syria had secretly purposed to encamp in a particular place, his design was made known by the prophet to the king of Israel, who was preserved through it more than once.† It was perceived by Nehemiah, that the Lord had not sent Shemaiah, but that he was hired by Tobiah and Sanballat.‡ If, Sir, after our peregrinations, we return to our own country, and fix ourselves in the metropolis, we shall find Providence unmasking the black designs of Popery, in the discovery of

* Fletcher's Life; Appendix, p. 424.

† 2 Kings vi, 9, 10.

‡ Neh. vi. 12, 13.

the Gunpowder-plot. The man of sin may, if he pleases, canonize the under-agents as saints, but the word of God declares every designer of evil—a sinner. Did not God, in this instance, appear in behalf of his people? Was it not a *Protestant* nation, that was the apple of his eye? Mr. W. would gladly persuade the world, that God is no respecter of persons in his providential proceedings; that he neither wards off evil, nor grants his blessings for the *sake* of *character*. It is a mercy for mankind, that they are not left to such teachers as Mr. W. for their guides in matters of religion. They listen to higher authority: “Thus saith the Lord your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, for *YOUR SAKE* I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships.”—“Except,” says Jesus Christ, “those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the *ELECT’S SAKE* those days shall be shortened.”* The reason why Saul was laid aside, and David advanced to the throne, was, because of the irreligion of the one, and the piety of the other: “And Samuel said unto him (Saul), the Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is *BETTER THAN THOU*.”† We behold Cyrus exalted; but for what purpose? Isaiah informs us, “For *JACOB MY SERVANT’S SAKE*, and *ISRAEL mine ELECT*, I have even called thee by name.”‡ How far Cyrus fulfilled this descriptive prediction of himself may be seen in Ezra, where we have the actual history.§ When the people of God departed from the truth, they were generally punished. Moses, on this subject, is very explicit; “Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked.” What was the result? “I will heap mischiefs; I will spend mine arrows upon them: the sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also, with the man of grey hairs.” The Israelites were taught to know by ex-

* Isaiah xliii. 14; Matt. xxiv. 22.

† Isaiah xlv. 4.

‡ 1 Sam. xv. 28; 1 Chron. xiii. 3.

§ Chap. i.

perience, that a prophet had been among them.* By consulting Ecclesiastical History, we shall find that the house of God has ever been polluted, prior to its being delivered to the enemy. One of the fathers† has a passage to this purpose: "After our affairs, through too much liberty, ease, and security, had degenerated from the rule of piety; and after one pursued another with open contumely and hatred, then followed persecution." While piety was maintained, the church of God was enabled to derive consolation from hence,—“I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast PRECIOUS in my sight thou hast been HONOURABLE, and I have LOVED THEE: THEREFORE will I GIVE MEN for thee, and PEOPLE for thy life.”‡

Mr. W. argues against providential *judgments*, because *misfortunes* are common to all;§ and insists, that whatever befalls an *individual*, it is not to be interpreted into a *judgment*: nay, “to pronounce that any human being, let his dereliction of duty be what it may, is suffering under the actual punishment of Divine justice,” is utterly improper.¶ He admits, though not without some reluctance, that dreadful calamities befalling *nations*, may, in rare and special cases, be thus partially interpreted: but even then, with extreme caution.¶ It must be confessed, Sir, that the conduct of Providence towards individuals, bears different aspects. The Providence which led the brethren of Joseph down to Egypt, seemed to look two ways at the same period: retrospectively upon their guilt, in bringing it to their remembrance; ** and forward to their preservation, in the time of famine.†† When Saul was slain by the Philistines, the event seemed to refer both to his own punishment and to the exaltation of David. But, Sir, however various the aspects of Providence may be in some instances, and however difficult it may be to determine the precise end it has in view,

* 2 Kings xvii. 6, 7; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14—17. † Eusebius's Eccles. Hist.

‡ Isaiah xliii. 3, 4.

§ Page 79—83.

¶ Page 86.

¶ Page 82, 83.

** Gen. xlii. 21.

†† Gen. xlv. 7.

and consequently, under what name to designate it, there are others perfectly intelligible. If you were to hear of a notoriously wicked man, (instances of which there have been,*) instantly struck dead at a cock-fight, while in the act of blaspheming God, and uttering the most horrid imprecations, would you not be justified in denominating this a *judgment*? What is a *judgment*? Is it not, according to Archbishop Tillotson's definition, God's "severer dealings with men,—in the remarkable punishment of great offenders, for example and warning to others?" And is not every thing connected with such a scene *offensive* to God? Does it not *call* for vengeance? And if vengeance *appears* in awful form, in answer to the call, must it be denominated a *mercy* or a mere ordinary event? Yes, Mr. W. would reply, any thing but a *judgment*. Which, Sir, is the most scriptural inference,—*judgment* or *mercy*? Such an individual unquestionably ripens for judgment, and judgment ripens for him. Providence not unfrequently provides graves for those whose throats are open sepulchres. Nor is the judgment of God less visible, in snatching a man from his fancied paradise; "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Death, in such a case, has a sting concealed within its sting.

There are some, Sir, like Seneca's Harpsten, who complained that the room was dark, when she was blind; that cannot discover a judgment for want of eyes. Notwithstanding Providence scatters its beams like the sun, its judgment remains invisible. Or, if seen, it is as the person who saw men as trees walking. They have a general and confused notion, that different calamities are distant tokens of the Divine displeasure. This may perhaps be partly occasioned by the native darkness of the human mind; "for we know" but "in part."† That darkness, however, is often maintained and increased by a want of serious reflection: "Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."‡

* I knew an instance of this kind not many miles from Alwrick in Northumberland.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

‡ Isai. i. 3.

The consequence of this is, they are often given up to judicial blindness: "Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors."* Turbulent passions too, not unfrequently occasion a mist, and make the clouds still more dense which envelope the understanding. Hence, David, crossed by a particular dispensation of Providence, indulged in the most extravagant grief; I mean on the death of Absalom; and the pride and peevishness of Jonah, prevented him from subscribing to the wisdom of God in sparing Nineveh. Unless a strict watch be maintained over the various passions of the heart, they will join their additional issue with the natural darkness of the mind; and so, like the earth, interpose between the individual and the light of Providence. God himself must aid us in a correct interpretation of his dispensations. David, utterly at a loss to account for the prosperity of the wicked, and his own calamities, says, "When I thought to know this it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God: then understood I their end."†

In the sudden death of a good man, however tragical apparently, every thing connected with his character authorizes us to maintain, that it is not a *judgment*, but only a removal from the evil to come. On the contrary, in the sudden death of an impenitent sinner, such a character as that already noticed, not any thing can be more awful; because the stroke at once severs him from all connection with mercy, puts a period to his probationary state, and prevents repentance. There is not any thing in either a wicked man's character or his prospects, that warrants us to consider him in a state of safety. Death itself is to such an one a judgment, and the manner in which he dies heightens the terror of the scene. "The Lord," says the Psalmist, "is known by the judgment he executeth."‡ We must determine the case, as far as we are concerned in it, according to the *moral character* of the individual who suffers: and unless the thing itself hath

* Isai. xix. 11.

† Psalm lxxiii. 16, 17.

‡ Psalm ix. 16.

its proper *name*, how are we to *know* in what manner to *improve* the circumstance? *Judgment* and *mercy* are to be improved in very different ways by *survivors* and *spectators*, and to produce widely different *impressions*; the one operating in a way of *terror*, the other of *joy*. It may be further remarked, that until we know whether a Providence refers to the *person* or the *action* of a man, we shall not know whether to *weep* or *rejoice*—a duty to which we are exhorted.* In the preservation of Sarah, when in danger of being defiled in the court of Abimelech, God had a respect to Abraham the *prophet*, not to Abraham the *distruster* of Providence. Providence gives no countenance whatever to Abraham's misconduct in the affair. The barbarians beheld St. Paul as a murderer, and supposed that vengeance, assuming a threatening aspect, was pursuing him: but when he shook the viper into the fire, without sustaining the smallest injury, they imbibed different sentiments. Persons previously acquainted with his moral and religious character, would not have considered it a *judgment*, though they had seen the viper coiling round his arm. We may, upon the whole, when fully acquainted with the character, determine; and ought to improve accordingly.

Mr. W. asks, "If no visible distinction can be discovered, how is it possible that this doctrine respecting the vengeance of heaven, can be of any practical utility? How can we expect that calamities of this kind should strike terror into the minds of those who confine their views to the present scene, when it is evident that their effects do not involve the fate of one class more than of another, and that without discrimination they affect the innocent and the guilty."† Whether this be applied to general calamities, which afflict whole nations, and in which the innocent and the guilty share the same fate; or to individuals, whether righteous or wicked, suffering in the same way, is of very little moment. Certainly a calamity can operate in a way of

* Rom. xii. 15.

† Page 82.

"terror," when the characters are *mixed*, and the case is *general*, as well as when *all* are *wicked*, and the company *small*. People only have to recollect, that it is the *wicked* part of the population who bring down the *judgments* of heaven—a sufficient subject of "*terror*;" and that during the general carnage, God takes his *faithful people* to himself—a proper subject of *triumph*. In this instance, his wrath is no more visibly awakened against the righteous, than when he permits them, on their passage to glory, to be tortured on the wheel, or burnt at the stake. Mr. W. allows that "*inferences of the greatest utility*"* may be deduced from the adverse circumstances of individuals; but what are "*inferences*," Sir, without "*practical utility*?" They may, it is true, by slow degrees, produce some kind of practical effect: but they can have none in *saving from sin*; because *sin* is not to be viewed as the *cause* of any providence, however awful. Not even in the case of dreadful public catastrophes, are we to consider what occurs as *judgments for sin*; "expressly designed to operate either as punishments for crimes recently committed, or as marks of the Divine anger for those which are past."† They are only to be innocently construed into "*instructive warnings of general concern*, and as affording solemn lessons of the frailty and instability of human life."‡ Still, however, in the judgment of Mr. W. they can be of no "*practical utility*," because no visible distinction is discovered; though bearing, at the same time, the character of "*instructive warnings, and solemn lessons*." *Sin*, the *cause* of all our *miseries*, is to be preserved in the back ground; and thus cease to excite our *indignation*, and produce *repentance*. "*Human frailty, and instability*," are to appear upon the stage as the principal characters, to excite our *sympathy*. Are we not authorised to say, "Your *iniquities* have separated between you and your God, and your *sins* have hid his face from you, that he will not hear;"§ "The face of the Lord is against them that do

* Page 88.

† Page 88.

‡ Ibid.

§ Isai. lix. 2.

evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth;”* “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all ungodliness and unrighteousness* of men?”† From the very soft and easy manner in which Mr. W. treats sin, it is not likely his converts from it will be numerous. His system forbids a just improvement of that text, “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”‡ It is not a lesson on the *frailty* of human life, but *righteousness*, which they are to learn. They are the *unrighteous* practices of the people that occasion these judgments; and the *cause* must be contemplated with the *effect*. Sin must be repented of, and forsaken.

All this, Sir, would not probably satisfy Mr. W. relative to *particular or individual judgments*. These he positively denies; affirming, “That there is in reality,—no reason for supposing that sudden death, or any other unforeseen calamity, is *now* inflicted on individuals by the hand of Providence as a punishment for their crimes.”§ He proceeds all along on the supposition—and his assertion is proof, that the system of things is now changed; that, though “The Almighty has chosen that the execution of his will shall be effected by the instrumentality of *general laws*,” part of which laws formerly operated in the way of *judgments*, yet they are now partially suspended. We may venture, without the fear of successful contradiction, to style the death of Ananias and Sapphira a *judgment*.|| As we see similar occurrences, and God has given no intimation in his Word of any change in his mode of proceeding, we naturally adopt the language of the sacred penman, and say, “Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.”¶ The moral law is of eternal obligation; its *blessings* and *curses* are, and will be, the *same* during this *probationary* state. The following passage of Scripture is as much in force now, as it was in the days of Moses: “Lest—it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart,

* Psalm xxiv. 16.

† Rom. i. 18.

‡ Isai. xvi. 9.

§ Page 87.

|| Acts v. 1—10.

¶ Psalm lviii. 11.

saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven."* If the law of God has been violated, and the violators suffer in some extraordinary way, I contend that, from this text alone, we have "*reason* for supposing that the *calamity* is inflicted on the individuals by the hand of Providence as a *punishment* for their *crimes*." Moses himself declares, that the Lord will not spare him,—that his *anger* and his *jealousy* shall *smoke against* THAT MAN. Take a few instances, Sir, in attestation that,—“Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth;” instances of individuals who have been generally supposed to have been monuments of Divine wrath:—

Jezabel, who thirsted for the blood of the prophets of God, became both meat and drink for the dogs of Jezreel.† *Joash*, who commanded his servants to slay Zechariah the son of Jeholada, was slain by his own servants; “so they executed judgment against Joash.”‡ *Antiochus*, after tormenting the Jews, was visited with the same plagues,—and actually rotted to death.§—*Herod the Great*, in addition to the dreadful calamities which befel his family, was smitten in a way that manifested the anger of the Lord was kindled against him. The account given of his latter end, by an ancient writer, is awful. From the time of his cruelties, it is said, sickness seized his whole frame, and subjected him to various complaints. He was afflicted with a burning fever—an intolerable itch over the whole body—continual pains—dropsy—swellings—inflammation—rottenness—worms—difficulty of breathing—and convulsions; insomuch that persons inspired by heaven declared that God was visiting him for his crimes.¶ Not satisfied with his former barba-

* Dent. xxix. 19, 20.

† 2 Kings ix. 36.

‡ 2 Chron. xxiv. 21–25.

§ 2 Maccab. ix.

¶ Euseb. Eccles. Hist. book i. chap. 9, p. 10. See also Josephus's Hist. vol. iv. p. 30, from whence Eusebius had his account.

ter, "What is the carpenter's Son doing?"
 preparing a coffin for Julian," replied the Chris-
 may perhaps be thought credulous, Sir, for
 the smallest credit to this story, but I really
 withstanding the sneers of Gibbon, the channel
 able as that through which the account of his
 conveyed. No man can read Fox's *Acts and*
of CHRISTIAN MARTYRS, and especially the
of De Roma and Rockwood, without being
 fected with the terrible visitations of God.
 y give them milder names than those of *judg-*
 be so defective in the sphere of vision as not to
 anger of the Lord in any calamity, or the *punish-*
 in the miseries of any notorious transgressor
 ys of the apostles—and may deduce from the
inferences of human frailty and instability;
 ns awake to the aggravating nature of moral evil,
 s who, because of sin, behold heaven deprived
 art of its angelic inhabitants, our first parents
 of the garden of Eden, a world deluged with

ol. iv. p. 31.

† Acts, xii.

‡ Micrel. de Eccl. Mos.

§ Sueton. Nero 6, p. 249.

|| Sueton. Dom. xii. p. 315.

cl. Hist. b. 7, chap. i. p. 81.

** Ibid, chap. ii.

†† Ibid,

n. xvii. 18.

‡‡ Abr. Bucoltzer, book 4, chap. 367; 650.

water, Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by fire, and the Son of God suffering in agonies as a sacrifice,—to persons who know that God has cursed the earth for the sin of man, that the brute creation travail in pain, that children are frequently thrown into convulsions (for physical as well as moral evil is an effect of the fall,) and that God not unfrequently chastises his own children with a whip of scorpions for the smallest deviations from moral rectitude,—to such persons I say, the subject will appear clothed with vengeance. "*Verily, he is a GOD that JUDGEETH in the EARTH.*"

As a specimen of Mr. W.'s mode of reasoning, take the following extract: "No event, I must repeat, can operate as a *judgment* with any certain effect, unless we possess positive means of ascertaining its *design*. But how is it possible to obtain a satisfactory proof that any serious misfortune is now intended as a judicial punishment of Heaven for the commission of any particular crime, when the observation of every day must convince us that the perpetrators of the very same crime are, in numberless other instances, suffered to pass their days in health, and outward prosperity, and to end them in the ordinary course of nature?"* *Lord Sidmouth*, to whom a copy of the work, no doubt, has been sent, as dedicated to him, would probably smile though not without a blush, for one of the sons of "Emmanuel College, Cambridge," when he cast his eye on this passage. His Lordship, as Secretary of State, might possibly advert to the late disgraceful disturbances in some of the midland counties, particularly in Nottinghamshire. He would recollect, that, at the Derby Assizes, several persons were tried for the *same* general offences, found *guilty*, and *condemned*. But he would recollect also, that through the royal clemency, several were returned to their homes and friends, and left to end their days in "the ordinary course of nature," while others suffered the *punishment* annexed by the law to their crimes. I ask, Sir, would his Lordship be prevented

* P. 87.

from perceiving the *design* of this *civil judgment* upon the *few*, because "the perpetrators of the very same crime," were, in this, as well as "in numberless other instances, suffered to pass their days in health and outward prosperity, and to" die a natural death? A poor Methodist would be able to see that the *design* of the whole was, to *punish* the few, to *reclaim* the associates, and *warn* the multitude. If men, through their inattention, and by aid of the false reasoning of Mr. W. are so blind as not to perceive something similar to this, in the proceedings of the Moral Governor of the world, they must submit to consequences. God is sufficiently explicit on the subject: "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Here we are informed, that one grand *design* the Lord has in view is, to instruct in *righteousness*; that this lesson is not intended barely for the inhabitants of Judea, but for the *world*; that there *are* such things as *judgments* in the *earth*; and that his *righteousness* cannot be *learned*, or be considered as an *effect* of those *judgments*, unless they are *known* to be *such*,—known to proceed from God as the punishment of crime. Mr. W. is forward to acknowledge, that, in the *judgments* noticed in Scripture, "the signal punishment of offenders was the immediate object."* The next time he appears before the public, he will perhaps explain why, since the same *causes* exist, and the same *warnings* are necessary, the judgments of God should cease? Why, whatever calamities may overtake the worst of men, they are to receive the mild appellation of "*accidents*," and "*misfortunes*?" Why not any thing can now operate as, or be intended for, a *punishment*?†

There is no afflictive dispensation of Providence without its design, under whatever name it may be assigned. One of the designs God proposed, in permitting the cruelty of Pilate to the Galileans, and the fall of the tower of Siloam on eighteen of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, was to give others an

* P. 88.

† *ibid.*

idea of the punishment which awaited themselves, in case they persisted in sin, and thereby of exciting them to repentance. The prophet Jeremiah relates the abominations which had been committed in Shiloh, and the punishment with which the people had been visited. He then expatiates on the wickedness of those around him, and their aggravated guilt in not taking the warning which had been given them in the punishment of others; "But go ye now unto my place, which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early, and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not: therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done unto Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim."* They knew what had befallen their brethren, and possibly drew some "*inferences*" from the catastrophe; but a knowledge of these, and other truths of religion, may be useless and pernicious, when unaccompanied with "*practical*" effect. Wicked persons, who pretend to this knowledge, pretend to more than they possess; for they have viewed the truths of religion only on one side; they have not seen them in their connection, order, and dependence; their knowledge, therefore, is partial and incompetent, and to them may be applied the words of another prophet, "It is a people of no understanding; therefore, he that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them, will shew them no favour."† The dying sinner sees occasionally, in the calamities of others, the image of his own danger. He sees death armed at every point, and him that has the power of death moving at his commands the winds, the waves, the pestilence, the tempests, the famine, and war. The Christian, extending his views a little further, sees how

* Jer. vii. 8-16.

† Isa. xxvii. 11.

ties of Providence excite in an enlightened
 s too, of "*practical utility*:" "But the
 nd are punished." An elegant writer,**
 rtain class of persons, says, "When we
 o have a spirit of blindness, we do not mean
 minds, who having received it from nature,
 reflection; men who think merely to adopt
 who talk merely to maintain absurdities.
 who pique themselves on a superiority;
 tence of emancipating the mind from error
 d of rising *above* the vulgar, so immerse
 or and prejudice, as to sink *below* the vul-
 o have knowledge indeed; but *professing*
ise, they become fools;†† and are so much
 o speak as the Scripture, *because they say*,
 treat those as weak-headed, whom the
 en prompt to self-examination, who re-
 of God, and who endeavour to penetrate
 e afflictions of mankind. More occupied
 with him whose counsel has determined the
 ; more occupied with politics, than with
 he reins of politics; and more attentive to

+ Chap. i. 7. ‡ Mic. vi. 9. § Amos iv. 12.

6. ** Saurin. †† Rom. i. 22. ‡‡ John ix. 41.

nature, than to the God of nature, they refer all to second causes, they regard nature and politics as the universal divinities; and the arbitrators of all events. This is what we call a spirit of blindness." I shall not weaken the point of this, Sir, by any applicatory remarks.

That *threatened judgments* have been averted on the *obedience* of the creature, will not be readily denied; and if so, *judgments* must be viewed as *punishments*, *punishments* must refer to *crime*, and the *suspension* of that punishment, on condition of *obedience*, makes a *visible distinction* in point of *character*—the dealings of God being adapted to the conduct of his creatures, as *saints* and *sinners*. Witness the inhabitants of Nineveh, threatened as sinners, and spared as penitents!* What applies to the whole in this case, will hold good with regard to individuals; for the *whole* is composed of *parts*, or individuals.† Suppose now, Sir, a person to

* Jonah.

† Many of God's threatenings are *conditional*, and this is necessary to be understood, that the truth of God may remain unimpeached in the mind of man. "Comminations of judgments to come," says Stillingfleet, "do not in themselves speak the absolute futurity of the event, but do only declare what the persons, to whom they are made, are to expect, and what shall certainly come to pass, unless God by his mercy interpose between the threatening and the event. So that comminations do speak only the *debitum pænæ*, and the necessary obligation to punishment; but therein God doth not bind up himself as he doth in *absolute promises*; the reason is because comminations confer no right to any, which *absolute promises* do; and therefore God is not bound to the necessary performance of what he threatens. Indeed, the *guilt*, or *obligation* to punishment is necessary, where the *offence* hath been committed to which the threatening was annexed: but the execution of that punishment doth still depend upon God's *arbitrary will*, and therefore he may *suspend* or *remove* it upon *serious addresses* made to himself in order to it. For since God was pleased not to take the present *forfeiture* of the first grand transgression, but made such a *relaxation* of that *penal law*, that *conditions of pardon* were *admittable*, notwithstanding *sentences passed* upon the malefactors; there is strong ground of *presumption* in human nature, that God's forbearance of mankind, notwithstanding *sin*, doth suppose his *readiness* to pardon offenders upon their *repentance*, and therefore that all *particular threatenings* of judgments to come do suppose *incurribleness* in those they are pronounced against: upon which the foundation of hope is built, that if *timely repentance* do intervene, God will remove those judgments which are threatened against them." Origines Sacre, p. 180, 181.

be *disobedient* in a moral sense, but *industrious* as a member of civil society; and suppose again, this person, prior to his conversion to God, to be *poor*, and after it, to *prosper* in the world, would there be any thing unreasonable in ascribing his *prosperity* to the *special blessing* of God upon his exertions? The supposition is not extravagant; the thing has been realized in various instances, even where habits of industry were contracted antecedent to habits of piety. I am not certain whether something of this is not included in God's address to David by Nathan: "If that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things."* Obedience, on some occasions, invites Providence to add to its blessings. In the Divine Being, there is infinite kindness, and he will not suffer those, in spirit at least, to remain a wilderness, who resemble Carmel for fruitfulness. Reverse the subject; look at an apostate from God. This man was in a state of *affluence* when *pious*; he sinks into *poverty* and wretchedness, when he becomes *wicked*. Would there, in this case, (and many there have been,) be any thing improper in attributing this change of circumstances to God's displeasure? To a *judgment*, though not upon the man's *soul* or his *body*, upon his *property*? Is there any thing antisciptural in the opinion, that the Supreme Being may change his *favours* when we change our *conduct*? I do not now refer to the reverses of fortune to which good and bad men are subject, continuing the *same* in *character*; but when a *manifest* change in God's dealings, *succeeds* a change of moral conduct. These remarks, Sir, are not intended, as you will perceive, to favour the charge already denied,—that temporal prosperity is a *necessary* result of piety. You are sensible of a wide distinction between a *natural consequence* and a *reward*; between the *blessing* of God upon our labours, and that which must follow as an *effect* from a *cause*. In the *reward*, it is *optional* with the Divine Being to bless or not to bless, since no *positive promise* binds him to confer it; in the other case, the doctrine

* 2 Sam. xii. 8.

of *imperious necessity* is involved. While the Methodists maintain the former, general observation compels them to renounce the latter. The Lord gave Cyrus *the treasures of darkness, the hidden riches* of the Babylonian temple, for having discharged his *duty*.* Because Nebuchadnezzar performed a *great service* at Tyre, he was rewarded with the whole land of Egypt; for, says the prophet, *he and his army had no wages* at Tyre; the Tyrians escaping by sea with all their effects, while he besieged their city by land.† Does God reward men who know him not, in the discharge of duty, and will he not occasionally reward his faithful servants, in consideration of their obedience? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," says our Lord, "and all these things shall be added to you." Professor Turretin has made some *just and necessary* observations on this subject, which, while they will act as a safe-guard against any undue advantage of an opponent, will help to explain the views of the Methodists on the general state of the question. "Hence arises," says he, in reference to the last text, "this inquiry, In what manner ought Christian ministers to enforce the doctrines of religion by motives taken from temporal advantages? Some divines describe the state of believers in this life as a state of perpetual affliction and infelicity. Others enlarge too much on the temporal advantages of piety, and Bellarmine makes the temporal felicity of the defenders of the church one evidence of the true church. In regard to the first extreme, the thesis is unwarrantable; for 1. It is contrary to experience. 2. The passages, from which they, who maintain it, reason, regard only some particular seasons. 3. It is injurious to the goodness of God. 4. It is hurtful to piety, for it discourages the weak. The second method is an opposite extreme, for, 1. Jesus Christ and his apostles proposed different motives. 2. It does not accord with the genius and design of the gospel. 3. It confounds the dispensation of the gospel with that of *law*. 4. It is contrary to experience.

* Isai. xlv. 3.

† Ezek. xxix. 18, 19, 20.

5. It is injurious to a great many pious persons, who are oppressed with afflictions. 6. It gives infidels an occasion to ridicule religion—What then, are we never to use motives taken from temporal advantages? Yes, they ought to be used: but used, however, with the following precautions. Previous to these, remark two plain principles: 1. Temporal advantages, strictly speaking, are not evangelical promises. 2. Piety and virtue naturally, and by a wise constitution of things, are attended with many temporal advantages; and, on the contrary, vice induces misery. Preachers, then, should, 1. Consider these advantages only as (not *necessary*) consequences of the natural constitution of things, and not as Gospel promises. 2. Allow there are many exceptions. 3. Exhort Christians to pray for these advantages conditionally, if their enjoyment of them may be for the glory of God. 4. Never propose them as principal motives to piety; but always fix the attention of their auditors on spiritual and eternal blessings. Finally, observe how Jesus Christ proposes these advantages in the text. He speaks of only the necessities of life; he proposes them only as appendages of greater blessings; and he does so rather to accommodate himself to our weakness, than to express any dignity in the objects themselves.”*

Though Christians have no *positive promise*, upon which to establish a belief, that temporal prosperity will invariably follow them, yet they have ground to expect the special care of Him, who says, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt:”† a care occasionally manifested in remarkable interpositions. They are encouraged in this from a review of the many *extraordinary providences* recorded in the sacred writings, and from a consideration of the many *parallel* cases which have engaged the attention of the Christian world since the apostolic age. Notwithstanding Mr. W.’s hostility to an extraordinary providence

* Turretin’s Theolog. Dis. vol. II. dis. 4.

† Isai. xliii. 2.

in the present day, I cannot, with the Bible as my interpreter, close my eyes to the subject; cannot but trace *resemblances* to the same *cause*. A few parallel cases may not be altogether uninteresting.

There are few who are not impressed with the subject of a *retaliating* Providence. Of this doctrine, the Scriptures furnish us both with *assertions* and examples. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled, and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee: when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee. He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword."* Let us turn, Sir, to examples. The *first-born* of Egypt were slain, and Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned in the Red Sea; circumstances which seemed to look that horrible edict full in the face, which was issued for the purpose of drowning the Hebrew children. "Samuel said," (to Agag,) "as thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women." Edom was visited with vengeance; and why? Because Edom had wreaked his vengeance upon Judah. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," said our Lord, "which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; behold your house is left unto you desolate." In reference to the martyrdom of the saints, it is said, "They have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy." The case of Adoni-bezek, too, who had cut off the thumbs and great toes of three score and ten kings, is very striking. He attributes it entirely to a *retaliating* Providence, and says, on having his own amputated,

* Matt. vii. 1, 2; Isaiah xxxiii. 1; Rev. xiii. 10.

"As I have done, so God hath requited me."* Having established the doctrine, my attention is next arrested with the case of John the Baptist. He was beheaded at the request of a young female, who was instigated to the work by her mother. This base woman, on the testimony of Jerom, treated the Baptist's head in a very diadainful manner, pulling out the tongue which she imagined had injured her, and piercing it with a needle. Mark the sequel, and you will see Providence interesting itself in the most remarkable manner, in the *revenge* of this *murder* on all concerned. Herod's army was defeated in a war occasioned by his marrying Herodias, which many *Jews* thought a judgment sent upon him for the death of John:† both *he* and Herodias, whose ambition occasioned his ruin, were afterwards driven from their kingdom with great regret, and died in banishment at *Lyons* in *Gaul*:‡ and Salome, the young person who requested the Baptist's head, fell into the ice, as she was walking over it, which, suddenly closing, cut off her own.§ The latter part, though not recorded in sacred history, leaves an impression on the mind almost equal to the case of Adoni-bezek; and, till the credit of the historian is destroyed, must remain as an *extraordinary retaliation* of the *providence* of God. Perhaps this may occupy a niche in the belief of Mr. W. from the *age* of its occurrence; though remote from the scene of miracles, unconnected with the Apostles and primitive Christians, and unrecorded in the New Testament. By descending the stream of time, we shall find on our way, the dreadful massacre at Paris returned with blood for blood. Cassin, the field-marshal, with twenty thousand men, were slain at the siege of Rochelle: Charles the Ninth wallowed in his own blood, issuing from every part of his body: the Duke of Guise was murdered in the King's chamber; the Duke of Anjou, who was

* Exod. i. 16, 22; chap. xii. 29; chap. xiv. 13; 1 Sam. xv. 33; Ezek. xxv. 12—14; Luke xiii. 34, 35; Rev. xvi. 6; Judges i. 6—8.

† Joseph. Antiq. vol. iv. p. 85. ‡ Ibid, p. 167. The edition of Josephus referred to is the Edinburgh one, Duod. 6 vols. 1815. § Niceporus's History, book 1, ch. 20.

brother to, and succeeded Charles the Ninth, was stabbed by a monk: and the Queen-mother died of a broken heart. In this, a retaliating Providence is visible. The coin with which the Divine Being makes his payments, may not always bear exactly the same image and superscription; but when even paid in bullion, there is no difficulty in perceiving that both have proceeded from the same mine: There is a general correspondence, with that which preceded.

I have already had occasion to advert to the second letter, where the Bible is maintained as the only *standard of appeal*; and since the same God reigns, and the same world is to be governed, the most rational and religious mode of procedure is, to compare recent occurrences with those recorded by God himself, and of which he is considered the author. A striking *similarity* will fully justify us in our conclusions, that the hand of God is as visible in the church, and in the world now, as in ancient times; not, observe, in working *miracles*, but in *extraordinary* interpositions of Providence. We have no certain method of determining the case otherwise, unless the Divine Being were to speak by an audible voice from heaven, or through the medium of inspired men, which we have no right to expect, and which, in such cases, is perfectly unnecessary, because he has *already spoken* on the subject, and his decisions, as in points of law—till those laws are repealed—must be *our rule of judgment*. When we find an individual, or a mob, all of a sudden disarmed of every wicked purpose, fleeing without any visible cause, or contrary to first designs, calmly listening to the minister they intended to oppose, and some of the leaders actually defending his person against the insults of their fellows;* are we not to consult the oracles of truth, to see whether we can find instances in which God has so influ-

* Though many instances of this nature may be found among the Reformers, the Quakers, the Puritans, and others; I shall only refer to a case or two among the Methodists, as it is *their* vindication that is chiefly intended: Wesley's Works, vol. ii. p. 410, 411; Nelson's Journal, p. 83, 84, 97, 98.

enced the wicked, as to occasion a change of purpose? And, if instances are to be found, is it not proper that he should have the glory of disarming an irreligious mind of its fury, of defending the persons of the devout, and of maintaining his own cause? How frequently, contrary to their natural bias, and the most probable inducements, has the Lord turned the hearts of men like the rivers of the south? Notwithstanding Laban was urged by violence and covetousness to injure Jacob, yet the latter could say, "God suffered him not to hurt me."* Esau, who had an inveterate hatred against Jacob, and who, from the formidable appearance of his attendance, seems to have set out with hostile intentions, nevertheless ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him."† In opposition to the temporal interests of the Egyptians, and their native antipathy to the Israelites, we read, that "the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required: and they spoiled the Egyptians."‡ There is a passage in the writings of Solomon, which is not unfrequently verified: "The wicked flee when no man pursueth."§ This is not always to be attributed to the force of conscience, but in many instances to the immediate hand of God, which has as much command over the *senses* of the *body* as over the powers of the mind. We are favoured with at least one explanation of this, in the flight of the enemies of Israel: "For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host."|| From the same place, it appears that *reason* does not only take a true, but even a false alarm from the *senses*, for the Syrians "Said one to another, lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled." We have an account of St. Austin, who, by losing his way, escaped the Donatists, who had way-laid him, with a view

* Gen. xxxi. 7.

† Gen. xxvii. 41; chap. xxxii. 6; chap. xxxiii. 4.

‡ Exod. xii. 36.

§ Prov. xxviii. 1.

|| 2 Kings vii. 6.

of depriving him of his life. Here, Sir, the interposition of God is as apparent as in the preservation of the Saul of Tarsus, when the Jews went about to kill him, and actually lay in ambush to effect their purpose. The apostle assigns the reason of his safety: "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day."* To abstract from these, the moral and religious character, and to suppose that God would have equally interposed if they had been notoriously wicked, is a thought possessing less piety than the apostle would suggest in attributing it to help from God. We see the preservation of two useful lives. It is not for me to assert, that the parallel cases noticed, will bear each other out in every *particular*; I only refer to the most prominent parts.

You will probably recollect, Sir, the case of the Protestants at Beziers, in France. Just at the moment the enemy was at the walls, going to surprise the place, a drummer, who was going to his quarters at midnight, in a state of intoxication, rung the alarum-bell, and roused the inhabitants. While I may be thought credulous enough to suppose that the man was directed by heaven to touch the string, I am equally confirmed in my belief, that God had a particular eye to the preservation of the pious *Protestants*; and that, because they did *protest* against *vice* and *error*. On one occasion, the Jews, because of their being *such*, were doomed to die; but God heard their prayers, and extended towards them his protection.† Christ rules in the midst of his enemies; and it is no uncommon thing for our Lord to make use of an individual, who is a stranger to true religion, to give, like the drummer, the alarm. An eminent instance of this occurs in the reign of David. The cruelty of an Amalekite to his afflicted servant, whom he left behind him, threw the young man into the way of David, whose information was the means of recovering the captive Israelites, together with the whole of that property which the enemy had

* Acts xxiii. 12—27; chap. xxvi. 21, 22. † Esther iii. 4—6; chap. iv. 1, 2, 16; chap. ix.

carried away from Ziklag.* That these things would not have taken place had others than Protestants or Israelites been concerned, is not our province to determine; but, certainly, the probability is in favour of a particular Providence over the righteous, in which God makes them the peculiar objects of his care. Much may be said on the subject of contingencies, whether *mental* or *physical*. Men may conceive their plans, and form their designs, but "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord."† With regard to those which are *natural* or *casual*, what is more contingent in itself than a *lot*? And yet, when "The lot is cast into the lap, the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."‡ Examples of this are to be found in the cases of Achan and of Saul.§ The will of the Most High is the foundation of contingencies, as well as of necessary events, or of things which are not in themselves contingent. A sparrow, for instance, has not the same principle of life as an angel, or a human being; and yet it cannot fall to the ground without God's permission. A powerful check this to the adversaries of the church. The proudest child of Haman has no reason to boast of to-morrow; for the morrow may effect both the death and interment of the plot. There are contingencies, which, at first sight, appear to the apprehension of man as insignificant as a number of loose straws scattered round a farm-yard; but, with these straws, artificially twisted by the band of Providence, a rope is made, no less strong to bind, than chains and fetters of iron.

Providence, in some instances, is better known some time *after*, than at the *time* of an *event*. The primary foundation is laid some years before; or, in other words, the seed is sown, which remains a considerable time beneath the turf. In the rescue of Mr. Wesley from the fire, when a child,|| the guardian care of God is as visible, especially when the

* 1 Sam. xxx. † Prov. xvi. 1. ‡ Ver. 33. § Josh. vii. 16, 17;
1 Sam. x. 21, 22. || Wesley's Works, vol. i. p. 76--79.

importance of his future life is contemplated, as in the salvation of Moses from the waters.* Who of the Israelites thought, that when Moses was born, and preserved by the young princess, deliverance from Egyptian bondage was remotely brought to birth, and nurtured with him in the court of Pharaoh? It is no disparagement of Scripture history, nor any deduction from the importance attached to Moses's preservation, to say, that, in modern times, the same *extraordinary* Providence is apparent. In both instances God receives the glory; and it can be no reflection on the Disposer of all events, to consider him as present with, and as capable of delivering his creatures now, as in times of old. No one will deny, who believes his Bible, that God, in a remarkable way, preserved the life of Elijah by means of ravens:† and who, that listens to the well-known fact of Moulin, who, during the Parisian massacre, was nourished a fortnight by a hen, which went regularly to the place where he lay concealed, and dropped her eggs, can exclude an extraordinary interposition of God? Or who does not see the finger of God in the preservation of one of our own countrymen, who crept into a small place beneath a pair of stairs, and escaped the hands of his pursuers by means of a spider weaving its web across the entrance of his retreat? for, on seeing this, the soldiers, supposing it had been there some time, declined further search.

The case of Mr. Wainewright is rather peculiar. Historical facts diminish in force, in the mind of a sceptic, according to the remote period of time in which they are transacted; just as a taper loses its brightness by being placed at a distance. But Mr. W. can perceive things operating as judgments and mercies some thousands of years ago; and yet when they approach his own day, such a haze surrounds them, that their very existence is denied. He can see God working in an extraordinary way at a distance; but when he comes next door, Mr. W. is not at home. It was not

* Exod. ii. 5--10.

† 1 Kings xvii. 6.

thus with archbishop Tillotson, who could see extraordinary instances of both judgment and mercy in his own times. Hence, speaking of the reigning powers, he observes of one of the Sovereigns, "Thus have I represented unto you a mighty monarch, who like a fiery comet, hath hung over Europe for many years; and by his malignant influence hath made such terrible havoc and devastations in this part of the world." He then directs the attention of his auditors to the august personage before them; "Let us now turn our view to the other part of the text: and behold a greater than he is here: a prince of a quite different character, who *does understand and know God to be the Lord, which does exercise loving-kindness and judgment, and righteousness in the earth*: and who hath made it the great study and endeavour of his life to imitate these Divine perfections, as far as the imperfection of human nature in this mortal state will admit: I say, a greater than he is here; who never said or did any insolent thing, but instead of despising his enemies, has upon all occasions encountered them with an undaunted spirit and resolution. This is the man whom God hath honoured to give a check to this mighty man of the earth, and to put a hook into the nostrils of this great leviathan, who has so long had his pastime in the seas. But we will not insult, as he once did in a most unprincely manner over a man much better than himself, when he believed him to have been slain at the Boyne: and indeed death came then as near to him as was possible without killing him: but the *merciful providence of God was pleased to step in for his preservation*, almost by MIRACLE: for I do not believe, that from the first use of great guns to that day, any mortal man ever had his shoulder so kindly kissed by a cannon bullet."* I say nothing, Sir, of the pertinency of the last figure of speech, a figure which Mr. W. would possibly conclude more worthy an ignorant Methodist, than a learned Prelate; but I maintain that, if words have any meaning, the

* Thanksgiving Sermon before the King and Queen, Oct. 27, 1692.
Jer. ix, 23, 24.

preacher considered, first, the misfortunes of the conquered king in the light of *judgments*. This is evident both from the text chosen—*God executing judgment in the earth*, and from the manner of its application. Secondly, that the preservation of king William at the battle of the Boyne, was an *extraordinary Providence*. And, thirdly, that he was thus preserved, because of his *numerous virtues*; plainly denoting, in contradiction to the system of Mr. W.* a *marked and visible distinction* on the ground of *moral character*. In confirmation of this, his improvement of the subject only requires to be cited; "Let us then glory in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of our salvation: let us now, in the presence of all his people, pay our most thankful acknowledgments to him *who is worthy to be praised; even to the Lord God of Israel, who alone doth wondrous things; who giveth victory to kings; and hath preserved our David his servant from the hurtful sword*. And let us humbly beseech Almighty God that he would long preserve to us the valuable blessing of our two excellent Princes; whom the Providence of God hath sent amongst us, *like two good angels*; not to rescue two or three persons, but almost a whole nation out of Sodom: by saving us I hope at last from our vices, as well as at first from that VENGEANCE which was *just ready* to have been poured down upon us." Their *good qualities* are considered as the *moving cause*, both of *individual* and *public* preservation. This appeal to the writings of Tillotson, is not made with a view to shew, that Mr. W. has *no right* to think for himself—no right but to think in conformity with his predecessors: it is intended to shew, that there is a difference of opinion among the official characters of the Established Church; that the Methodists are not singular in their views, and that while they are opposed by a Rector, they are supported by an Archbishop, whose praise is in all the churches. And surely, Sir, the opinion of the latter will stand as high in the estimation of every genuine churchman as that of the former! There were characters in the days

† P. 64.

of the Reverend Prelate, similar to some around us, of whom he thus speaks in the same sermon; "God has of late visibly made bare his arm on our behalf, though some are still so *blind and obstinate* that they *will not see it*; like those of whom the prophet complains, *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they will not see, but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at thy people.*" In the estimation of Mr. W., the recent calamities of Europe "may be satisfactorily explained by referring to the operation of *secondary causes*, without unnecessarily supposing the miraculous intervention of the arm of Omnipotence."* Such is the obscurity in which they are involved, that it is impossible for him to determine their specific character, whether *judgments* or mere *misfortunes*! We are not, in fact, to consider any thing as a "punishment for crimes;" and the only instructions to be received from such events, are "*lessons of the frailty and instability of human life!*"

Mr. W. in his Appendix,† quotes an article from the Methodist Magazine, for March 1818, in support of what he has advanced on the absurdities of the Methodists. The circumstance is found under the head of "*The Providence of God asserted,*" and refers to the case of Mr. Keighly and Mr. Burbeck, two preachers who were going to their circuit. The most remarkable particulars in the relation seem to be, the appearance—the audible voice—the prediction—its fulfilment—and the means employed by the latter to evade it. As to the circumstance itself, I am as little disposed to contradict it, as I am remote from the means of further confirming its truth. The case was extraordinary; and many extraordinary things have occurred. The *predictive* part will be kept in countenance by Bishop Usher's prophecy concerning *the slaying of the witnesses*, together with his other predictions.‡ Possibly some warm friend of the Prelate might, in his defence, contend that the spirit of prophecy was, in some particular cases, promised to persons under the present dispensation, from—"I will pour out my Spirit

* P. 84.

† P. 212.

‡ Dr. Parr's Life of Usher, Folio, p. 76, 82.

upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions."* Possibly, I say, this might have been the case: but I leave it; only observing, that if the events corresponded with the predictions, this passage of Scripture would weigh more with the Bishop's friends than the bare assertions, or unsupported denial of his opponents. When Burbeck saw, according to what had been foretold, the death of his pious companion, he was anxious to guard against his own dissolution, but could not. Something similar to this once happened in another country. A person of the name of Micaiah foretold the death of Ahab, king of Israel. To evade it, the monarch disguised both his *person* and his *armour*; and yet, notwithstanding all his precautions, an arrow found its way between the joints of the harness. Jehoshaphat, on the contrary, in the same battle, and in more imminent danger than Ahab, was preserved: "And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it is the king of Israel, (having on his royal robes.) And they turned aside to fight against him: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him; and God moved them to depart from him."† The case of Ahab is adduced as an illustration, only so far as his conduct is concerned in endeavouring to *evade* the accomplishment of the prediction. Indeed, your good sense, Sir, would never allow you to demand a *perfect illustration*. Such a demand would restrict the Divine Being to only *one* mode of working; and persons would consider it a sufficient justification of their conduct to deny any work to be of God, because, in *every instance*, it did not correspond with other preceding events, however visible his hand might be in detached parts.

It is neither repugnant to Scripture, nor incompatible with reason to suppose, that in this remarkable case, the ministry of angels was employed. I am aware, Sir, that this doctrine has but a slight hold on the minds of many, who, otherwise, are every way worthy the appellation of Chris-

* Acts ii. 17.

† 1 Kings xxii. 28—36; 2 Chron. xviii. 32.

because they have no tendency to promote order, crime, and advance the public good, but because he is a *sinner* against the laws of his country, is giving full scope to every improper propensity, deserving of that punishment he anticipates. If fallen angels as malicious and mischievous as they are represented in the oracles of truth, they would, without power in Providence,† deface the beauty of every work of God, and convert the world into a scene of confusion. The circumstance of *Michael the archangel contending with the devil about the body of Moses*,‡ may lead us to conclude, that good angels frequently counteract the operations of evil, and frustrate the designs of, wicked spirits. The apostle asks, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” This text is general in its application. It would be absurd to argue against the *agency* of good angels on account of their *invisibility*; for, by the same rule, lapsed intellects would not be agents, unless they were to assume human form. It will admit of a doubt whether Job could see the devil with the naked eye, and yet he felt him to be there. The angelic hosts are incessantly employed, and are apprehensible to the faculty of sight; and it is

possible they might have some share in what befel Keighly and Burbeck. Daniel had no reason to suppose that the angel was indifferent to the concerns of the church, because he saw him not for the space of one and twenty days.* There are many well-attested facts respecting angelical appearances in later ages. We are far from supposing that they preach any new doctrine; in such a case, they would incur the apostolic curse.† We are not, however, to infer from hence, that the Supreme Being does not, in a more than ordinary manner, occasionally permit them to aid the understanding in the right perception of truth, to give directions for the prevention of danger, to warn of approaching dissolution, and to relieve distress. At a time the most seasonable, Zuinglius, it is said, had a portion of Scripture suggested to him in a vision, which fully illucidated the meaning of that text,—“*This is my body.*” Scultetus relates a fact concerning Gryneus, which took place at Spire; of one who visited Melancthon at his lodgings, of singular appearance, which bespoke him, as was believed, an inhabitant of the celestial regions. He asked for Gryneus, who was then absent, and intimated that there were snares preparing for him, into which he was desirous that worthy character should not fall, and immediately disappeared. On the return of Gryneus, Melancthon informed him of the circumstance, and advised him to hasten from Spire to Heidelberg. Just after his departure, a company of armed men arrived to apprehend him. Luther also relates a circumstance of a woman and two children, who suffered from extreme want in the time of great scarcity at Eiliben. They went to a well, where they were met by a person supposed to be an angel, who asked the woman whether she thought she would obtain proper nourishment at the fountain? She, in reply, asked, “Why not? All things are possible to God, and can be done with ease. He that fed the Israelites forty

* Dan. x. 12, 18.

† Gal. i. 8.

of Scripture, or repugnancy to reason. It to suppose, that God appoints good angels pious, as that he permits devils to tempt these stories, if correct, only go to form a paradox on what God himself, in an interrogative is to expect; "Are they not all ministering both to minister to them who shall be heirs of life? Will more ridiculous must be the prayer which is offered up, to such characters, than that of the angels?" "O Lord! Governor of heaven and of earth, whose hands are disembodied and departed spirits, have ordained the souls of the dead to minister to the living; I appointed my departed wife to have care of me, that I may enjoy the good effects of her attention to me, whether exercised by appearance, imagination, or in any other manner agreeable to thy will; forgive my presumption, enlighten my ignorance."

vidence was remarkably visible in one of the Irish Rebel-
out any angelic appearance. It is reported that a poor
woman on the mountains with her infant child; and not being able
to hold the object of her love ready to perish. During her
struggle a bottle full of milk, which saved them both. Can religion
be so attributing this to the kind interposition of the God of
4—20.

rance, and however meaner agents are employed, grant me the blessed influences of thy Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*

Without confining our attention to any separate part, in things in which we see either the Methodists or Methodism interested, we only need to take a very superficial glance at the whole, to be convinced of the special providence of God in behalf of the body. Mr. W. contends, in reference to the first propagators of Christianity, that we must "Either deny the truth of all ancient and modern history, or conclude, that, in effecting this gigantic design, these humble individuals must have been aided by the supernatural interposition of Divine Providence."† To the justice of this remark, Sir, you have already subscribed; and you have also seen‡ how well adapted his mode of reasoning is to the case of Methodism—a system which, in many instances, has been established by very unpromising instruments. Were a child, by grappling with an athletic person, to throw him to the ground, it would be denominated an extraordinary circumstance, there being no proportion between the strength of a child and that of a person in mature life: and yet, if the man were poising himself in a chair, and in an almost tottering position, a very slight touch would lay him prostrate. The first is an illustration of Providence, which, by an astonishing combination of apparently weak means, and by an opportune application of those means, has effected, in the present age, a work the most glorious. Or, if Mr. W. will admit of no parallel here, we may conduct him a few centuries back, where, like a person whose sight has failed him, and who, being deprived of his glasses, is obliged to hold the book at a distance, he will be able to perceive things more distinctly. The sacred historians inform us of the noble acts of Solomon, while "young and tender;" and of those of Josiah, who was "eight years old when he began to reign."§ But the deficiencies of their

* Dated April 26, 1752. Life by Boswell, vol. i. p. 151. † Page 123, 124.

‡ First Letter. § 1 Chron. xxix. i; 1 Kings iii. 28; 2 Kings xxii. 1.

1 Scripture, either in the way of assertion
 Providence will ever be found to harmonize
 as well as with itself. "Can two," it is de-
 together, except they be agreed?"† Upon
 our negative. Scripture and Providence
 together; they are perfectly agreed, as it
 of their journey, at which point to meet;
 may appear to forsake the company of each
 1, it is more in appearance than in reality.
 y be properly understood, and Providence
 and wrong. Like two rods in a vessel of
 put on an oblique appearance; but it is
 the medium, not to the objects. The moral
 world will never omit, in his Providence,
 reputation of his Word. So audible, in
 mony of Providence, that it can be distin-
 ur of a Pagan. "The captain of the guard
 and said unto him, the Lord thy God hath
 evil upon this place: now the Lord hath
 done according as he hath said."‡ The
 between Scripture truth, and the proceedings
 as such, that the latter may be designated
 or a *Practical Commentary* on the former.

Perfectly in unison with the sentiment, that Providence never makes a *visible distinction* between the righteous and the wicked, Mr. W. cannot believe that God will ever "alter the progressive series of causes and effects, for the purpose of advancing the success of one portion of his creatures, or of defeating the projects of another, when occupied in their temporal and private concerns."* No small surprise would have been excited, Sir, if, when you were engaged with your notes on the Bible, you had met with this sentiment. It is possible it might have experienced considerable opposition in your mind, from the following facts: viz. the case of Mordecai and Haman,† and the prayer of David, which converted a wise man into a fool—"O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithopel into foolishness;"‡ in both of which cases, God defeated the designs of the one to advance the interests of the other. Equally present to your mind would be the case of the Egyptians, of Balaam, of the king of Syria, of Saul, and of Herod. "Come on," said the king of Egypt, in reference to the Israelites, "let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply."§ Their sinful policy was steeped in blood, but the conclusion was very different from what they intended. The Israelites multiplied—collected immense treasures—made their escape—while the Egyptians suffered in a manner unparalleled in the annals of history. Balaam was commissioned to curse Israel; he was preserved on the road; on he drove, big with his design; but an over-ruling Providence prevented the accomplishment of his purpose. "And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. And Balaam said unto Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine

* Page 76.

† Esther.

‡ 2 Sam. xv. 31; chap. xvii. 14, 23.

§ Exod. i. 10.

own mind.”* The king of Syria sent forth horses and chariots, and a great host, to Dothan, with a view to take Elisha prisoner; and yet, as the sequel proves, their work was not accomplished.† Saul, with considerable policy, gave the hand of his daughter in marriage to David, that she might become a snare to him;‡ but the stratagem was so far from succeeding, that the deceiver was actually deceived. Her love to David was strikingly displayed, when the messengers of death approached his residence.§ When the execrable Herod was for playing the politician—“Bring me word that I may worship him,” he was outwitted, for God warned the wise men in a dream.|| These men were entirely “occupied in their *temporal* and *private* pursuits:” the Egyptian monarch wished to increase his revenues—Balaam was promised honours and riches—the king of Syria was desirous of gratifying a private pique—Saul was determined to establish himself on the throne of Israel—and Herod was alarmed for his personal prosperity. Plans were conceived, and works were performed by each, which, like so many “*causes*,” were calculated to produce very different “*effects*” to those which ensued: and, as far as we can judge, the Almighty had no other design in view than that “of *advancing the success of one portion of his creatures, and of defeating the projects of another.*” David was better acquainted with God’s proceedings in the world than Mr. W. when he exclaimed, “Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it; and hath fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head; and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.”¶

The same order is observed by Divine wisdom, in the government of the church as in the government of the world. This remark is made, not because the church is included in Mr. W.’s statement, but because it shews God’s regard

* Numb. xxiv. 10—13.

† 2 Kings vi.

‡ 1 Sam. xviii. 21.

§ 1 Sam. xix. 11.

|| Matt. ii. 7, 8.

¶ Psal. vii. 14--16.

to character. Religion has generally prospered most under the severest persecutions; a cause but ill adapted to produce such effects, in any other than in the hands of God. "The things," says the apostle, "which happened unto me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel."* Similar to this is the remark of Tertullian, "As often as we are mowed, we are sowed." Even the errors with which the church of God has been pestered, have made truth shine more illustriously. They were the errors of Ebion and Cerinthus, it is generally supposed, that occasioned St. John to write his Gospel. Through them we have had deeper researches into truth. Their use is adverted to by the apostle, "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."† Here we see "the progressive series of causes and effects" altered; error advancing truth: heretics encircling the Christian character with additional lustre. If we approach nearer our own times—times in which every thing seems to be involved in mist and darkness to Mr. W. we shall see the designs of some frustrated, to promote the interests of persons better than themselves. It is familiar to most, how the bull of his Holiness, and the thundering edict of Charles V. rather furthered, than curtailed the speed of the Gospel, in the days of Luther. A remarkable story is related by Bishop Usher, whose uncle, relating it one day at table, at Christ's Church, Oxford, had it confirmed by a gentleman, who confessed himself to be the person. It runs thus: "About the third of the reign of Queen *Mary*, a pursuivant was sent with a commission into *Ireland*, to empower some eminent persons to proceed with fire and faggot against the Protestants. It happened, by *Divine Providence*, this pursuivant at *Chester* lodged in the house of a Protestant innkeeper, who, having got some intimation of the matter, secretly stole his commission out of his cloak-bag, and put the knave of clubs in the room thereof. Some weeks after, he appeared before the lords of the privy council at *Dublin*,

* Phil. i. 12. † 1 Cor. xi. 19.

and produced a card for his pretended commission. They caused him to be committed to prison for such an affront. Here he lay for some months, till, with much ado, at last he got his enlargement: then he returned to *England*; and, quickly getting his commission renewed, makes with all speed to *Ireland* again; but, before his arrival there, he was prevented with the news of Queen Mary's death." Mr. W. may, if he pleases, enlarge his "Appendix" with this story, and insert it in a future edition of his work, as a proof of the weakness and credulity of the Methodists, for conjuring up such relations, and for supposing that God had any hand in preventing a torrent of blood streaming from the veins of his people.

Leaving the affairs of the Church, let us again take a look into the world, and see whether some historical fact cannot be found in evidence of what has been advanced—that God actually thwarts the proceedings of some, to succeed those of others. Dr. Robertson gives us a case in point. "When Columbus," says he, "arrived at St. Domingo, he found eighteen ships ready loaded, and on the point of departing for Spain. Columbus immediately acquainted the Governor with the destination of his voyage, and the accident which had obliged him to alter his route. He requested permission to enter the harbour, not only that he might negotiate the exchange of his ship, but that he might take shelter during a violent hurricane of which he discerned the approach from various prognostics, which his experience and sagacity had taught him to observe. On that account he advised him likewise to put off, for some days, the departure of the fleet bound for Spain. But Ovando refused his request, and despised his counsel. Under circumstances in which humanity would have afforded refuge to a stranger, Columbus was denied admittance into a country of which he had discovered the existence, and acquired the possession. His salutary warning, which merited the greatest attention, was regarded as the dream of a visionary prophet, who arrogantly pretended to predict an event beyond the

reach of human foresight. The fleet set sail for Spain. Next night the hurricane came on with dreadful impetuosity. Columbus, aware of the danger, took precautions against it, and saved his little squadron. The fleet destined for Spain met with the fate which the rashness and obstinacy of its commanders deserved. Of eighteen ships, two or three only escaped. In this general wreck perished Bovadilla, Rolan, and the greater part of those who had been the most active in persecuting Columbus, and oppressing the Indians. Together with themselves all the wealth which they had acquired by their injustice and cruelty, was swallowed up. It exceeded in value two hundred thousand *pesos*; an immense sum at that period, and sufficient not only to have screened them from any severe scrutiny into their conduct, but to have secured them a gracious reception in the Spanish court. Among the ships that escaped, one had on board all the effects of Columbus, which had been recovered from the ruins of his fortune. Historians, struck with the exact discrimination of characters, as well as the just distributions of rewards and punishments, conspicuous in those events, universally attribute them to an immediate interposition of Divine Providence, in order to avenge the wrongs of an injured man, and to punish the oppressors of an innocent people.* This, Sir, is the most natural conclusion; a conclusion to which Mr. W. himself might possibly have been brought to submit, had the circumstance only occurred twelve or fourteen hundred years more early. It is difficult to account for the incredulity of some men, unless it proceeds from a persuasion—that we are to reject every thing as an extraordinary interposition of Providence in the present day, because there are no prophets—no evangelists—no apostles, appointed by Heaven to write a Bible suitable to the times, in which every thing is specifically pointed out, with the names of the persons concerned, and noticed as special, with—"Thus saith the Lord." But

* Hist. Amer. vol. i. p. 200—202, duo. edit.

and "moderate rain and showers,"—turn away
ed plague of rain and waters"—let "scarcity
turned into cheapness and plenty"—"increase
the earth"—"save and deliver us from the
enemies, abate their pride, assuage their malice,
their devices"—and that he would "withdraw
e and grievous sickness."* Perfectly to keep
in countenance, he may omit these, and save
at deal of trouble. There may be something,

his being *obliged* to read them as a clergy-
in opposition to his creed; and in that instance
ly pitiable; to offer up prayers without the
an answer—with a firm persuasion that the
' alters the progressive series of causes and
ording to such a scheme, the wicked, who pray
share equally with the righteous, who, in *every*
ication and prayer, make their requests known
l. Ridiculous, indeed, would it be for any
or *particular* cases, did God never act contrary
s—laws never to be *suspended*.† And yet it has
mon practice of pious characters. "God
id Jacob, "give you mercy before the man,

that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin."* From their previous cruelty to Joseph, there was very little ground for mercy; nor is it probable that they would have met with equal kindness, brothers as they were, had not grace reigned in the heart of their benefactor. But Jacob was impressed with the truth of that sentiment, long before it appeared in writing—"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."† This it was that emboldened the prophet to pray as he did: "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth, by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."‡ An example this worthy of imitation, and to which, in other particular emergencies, we are encouraged, from the consideration, that "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are."

It would be placing Mr. W. lower than, in many instances, he has placed himself, to suppose that an objection, so common and so natural, would not occur to him, as that of his scheme rendering prayer unnecessary and ineffectual. He fully anticipates it, and endeavours to give it the meeting in his own way. "It must unquestionably be admitted," says he, "that no human prayers, however devout, no prostration of the soul, however sincere, will ever operate as an inducement with the Deity to violate or suspend those established laws by which the system of the universe is governed and upheld. We can never so far presume upon his benevolence, as to imagine that he will now miraculously interpose in favour of any of his intelligent creatures, whatever may be the difficulty and distress in which they are involved."§ More than once, Sir, I have disclaimed all pretensions to *miraculous* deliverances, on the part of the Methodist body; and, from Mosaic, prophetic, and apos-

* Gen. xliii. 14. † I John v. 14. ‡ James v. 17, 18. § Page 71, 72.

for the *sake* of a *redeemed, intelligent, immortal* leave to propose this, Sir, as his next thesis; be decided before any credit can be attached to reported assertions. Besides, the *difficulties* and represented to be such, as to render a *miraculous* necessary; whereas, the occasional interpositions which the Methodists contend, are, in the language already quoted, "perfectly agreeable to the order of nature and of Providence, and only *special* applications of general laws to *particular occasions*." From what is stated by Mr. W. we should be led to imagine, supposing the system of a race of beings who exist, at their instance, God would convert the earth into the ice of winter—arrest the earth in its orbit—blot out the sun from the face of heaven—and turn day into blood. It must be admitted, in the mean time, that the Lord gives considerable latitude to man to depend on his benevolence," in these sentences; "*Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. I have said unto you, that ye shall not sin: that ye have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall have, that your joy may be full. If ye shall ask the Father in my name, I will do it.*" Unfortunately, Mr. W. is not able to apply these passages solely to the

disciples; for they have, by some means or other, found their way into the *Collects* of the Church of England, and are printed for the *present* use, as applicable to the present condition of its members.*

Mr. W. proceeds, "But, notwithstanding the undeviating course of nature, not only is the exercise of prayer a duty clearly resulting from the relation which subsists between the Creator and the creature, but its obligation and its efficacy are placed beyond the possibility of doubt by the explicit language of the Sacred Writings. The particular mode in which our supplications are rendered efficacious, and in what manner their objects are attained, without any interference with the pre-ordained system of the world, and with the chain of causes and effects connecting the past with the future, it is not for the feeble intellects of man to comprehend or determine. It is sufficient to be assured, that the practice of this duty is attended with the most beneficial influence on the mind, and that as it is appointed to be a means, it must, of necessity, contribute to the attainment of its end."† Talking about the *mode* or *manner*, is the very climax of absurdity in the present instance; that belongs exclusively to God; nor is it a matter of the smallest importance to a Methodist in what *manner* prayer is answered, provided it be answered, and if that answer promote the glory of God and his own salvation. What he is most desirous of *comprehending* is, not the *mode*, but the *fact*; and this is a task for which his *feeble intellects* are every way adequate. Prayer is conceded to be a *duty*, and so *efficacious* as to accomplish its *end*. Further than this, no Methodist wishes to proceed; because, if prayer "*must of necessity contribute to the attainment of its end*," it will be as prevalent in *extraordinary* as in *ordinary* cases. Whatever may be the purport of the petition, still it is *prayer*, and that prayer will answer its *end*. But, Sir, notwithstanding this concession, there are, from the general tone of expression

* Collect, Fifth Sunday after Easter; Saint Phil. and Saint James's Day.

† Page 72, 73.

adopted, some grounds of apprehension that Mr. W. is among those who talk about answers to prayer without a *personal knowledge* of the answer to the individual who receives it, or who hope that prayer will be answered on some *future occasion*—say, some years hence—or when the subject has entered the invisible world. But is it not essential to the *comfort* of man, and when in the utmost peril, to his *safety*, to *know* that his prayers are *efficacious*? Can this be *known* without an *answer*? Do not their *efficacy* consist in an *answer*? But of what avail can that answer be, that does not either produce *virtual* or *actual* deliverance? Virtual, as in the case of St. Paul, when God said, “My grace is sufficient for thee;” actual, as in the case of Elisha, when God delivered him from the king of Syria? Both of these *knew* that their prayers were *then* efficacious. They could comprehend the *fact*; and this the feeble intellects of every Christian may comprehend, though the answer may not extend to the act of God breaking in upon the regular order of the world.

Mr. W.’s remarks upon persons who expect deliverance without adopting every necessary precaution, are just;* but they are inapplicable to the Methodist body. The Methodists know that prayer is one *mean*, and a mean that will accomplish its *end*; and that it has proved effectual when every other mean has failed. Their subsequent conduct, however, has evinced, that they were not, on other occasions indifferent, to every thing but prayer. Though they consider the use of the means the province of man, they are far from acting as though there were no superintending *Providence* to *direct*, through the *prevalence* of *prayer*, to means the most *effectual*, and no Divine *grace*, to *empower* them to *use* the means to which they may thus be directed.—Not to use the means is to *violate* the *command* of GOD. “Make thee,” says God to Noah, “an ark of gopher-wood.” And “thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.”† Without the use of the means, Noah would have

* Page 72, 73. † Gen. vi. 14, 22.

sent an angel, which cut off all the
 and the leaders, and captains, in t
 Assyria." Not to use the means is
 Israelites did not throw aside their
 promised the land of Canaan. To hav
 the enemy, would have been to fig
 they were put in possession of th
 were to direct their attention, not t
 the corn of the land supplied their n
 On Satan tempting our Lord,—“C
 said unto him, It is written again,
 the Lord thy God.”§ These are p
 thodists are well instructed. Jealou
 they should place too much depend
 efforts, several particulars are permit
 against such presumption. They kn
 prerogative of God to succeed ev
 “Unto God the Lord belong the
 preparation of the heart in man,

* 1 Thess. iv. 11, Phil. ii. 12. + 2 Chron.

- § Matt. iv. 5,

tongue, is from the Lord—The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord.* *Secondly*, that means the most likely are ineffectual, while means the most unpromising attain their end, as God sees fit to dispose of them in his inscrutable wisdom. Thus, through means the most insignificant, some have recovered from severe indisposition, while others, after immense expense, and employing the most skilful physicians, have died of the same complaint. Even Asa's college of physicians fail to cure him; and he is charged with this at last, "In his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians."† *Thirdly*, that no means, however likely, will prove successful till God work by his providence. It would be a reflection upon the politic character of Joseph, to suppose that he had not availed himself of the most probable means to secure his liberty. One method which he tried, is noticed; "But think on me (said he to the chief butler,) when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me; and make mention of me unto Pharoah, and bring me out of this house." In this, Joseph did his duty; "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him."‡ Forgotten as he is by the butler, he is remembered by the Lord. The king is visited by a dream, the report of which circulates through the palace. On this the butler is awakened from his forgetfulness, and we hear him addressing the royal ear with, "I do remember my faults this day."§ And, *lastly*, that means not unfrequently produce a contrary effect to what was intended, or they might in all probability have produced. Notwithstanding our Lord's reply to the charge of sovereignty—the dissuasive of Pilate's wife—and the testimony of Pilate's own conscience,|| all of which bore on his acquittal, yet he must suffer. In short, the Methodists bear in mind the example of Jacob, who, while he used prayer, neglected not to forward gifts with a view to appease the anger of his

* Psal. lxxviii. 20. Prov. xvi. 1, chap. xxi. 31. + 2 Chron. xvi. 12.

† Gen. xl. 14, 23.

§ Gen. xli.

|| John xviii. 36, Matt. xxviii. 19, chap. xxvii. 24.

brother. There was a laudable union of piety and policy. It is not with the Methodists, as it is with some of their contemners, converting the *means* into the *expressive figure* in the whole of the business, and the Divine Being into a *dumb cypher*. After the means are used, and sanctified by prayer, resignation follows. "Let Him do to me as seemeth Him good." Other doctrine than this is not taught by the preachers; other conduct than this is not sanctioned by the body.

Prayer, in the judgment of Mr. W., is rather calculated to *impress the mind with sentiments of piety*, than to afford *actual relief* to our *circumstances*. This is the natural inference to be drawn from his scheme. It is in this light too, that we are to contemplate the doctrine of Providence. A passage is brought forward by Mr. W., from the writings of Dr. Paley, in confirmation of his own sentiments. "If it be still asked," says the Doctor, "Of what use at all, then, is the doctrine, if it neither alter our measures, nor regulate our conduct? I answer again, that it is of the greatest use, but it is a doctrine of sentiment and piety, not (immediately at least) of action or conduct; that it applies to the consolation of men's minds, to their devotions, to the excitement of gratitude, the support of patience, the keeping alive and the strengthening of every motive for endeavouring to please our Maker; and that these are great uses."* Perhaps it will be found, on calmly considering the subject, that Providence is as much a doctrine of *subjection* as of *sentiment*. Since the dispensations of God cannot be fully understood by us, it is fair to infer, that it is not so much a perfection of the *understanding*, (and it is, with this, that *sentiment* is more immediately connected,) as a perfection of the *will*, that he intends by them: and every dispensation of Providence should have such "practical influence upon our conduct" as to engage us either in the *practice* of *prayer* or of *praise*, according to the nature of the visitation. That it is a doctrine of *piety*,

* Page 79.

is not for me to dispute; but it is piety accompanied with vigorous action.

On one page, Mr W. censures the Methodists for descending, in their prayers, "to their own individual concerns;" and on the other, he encourages prayer for "individual wants."* By way of softening this inconsistency, it must be observed, that it is to their manner he principally objects. "Not satisfied with offering their devout and earnest petitions," says he, "at the throne of grace, and cheerfully submitting themselves to the disposal of Infinite Wisdom, they falsely expect that the attainment of their end will be best promoted by importunity and repetition, and resolve, (to adopt their own phraseology,) *to wrestle with God in prayer* till they experience, or imagine they experience, a favourable result."† This, Sir, is a confirmation of what has been stated respecting Mr. W.'s indifference to an *immediate* answer to prayer; and seems to savour a good deal of a phrase in the mouths of modern pharisees;—"Do your part, and God will make up the rest;" that is, you will make it up between you, and as it is a partnership concern, you will share in the glory. Not satisfied with barely "*doing his duty*," to use a common expression, the heart of a Methodist goes out after his prayers; he is always on the wing of expectation till they are answered; he does not mutter them over, and then leave them, without any concern as to their ultimate success; it is not a matter of indifference with him, whether they are answered or not. Mr. W. may "*imagine*" that no answer can be "*experienced*," and he is welcome to all the consolation his doctrine will afford: but while he continues to warm himself with sparks of his own kindling, the Methodist will listen to the voice of the prophet, "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer."‡—But they "*resolve to wrestle with God in prayer!*" And did not Jacob *wrestle* in prayer? and wrestled too till he *prevailed*?§—"They falsely expect that the attainment of their end will be best

* Page 74, 75.

† Ibid.

‡ Isai. lviii. 9.

§ Gen. xxxii. 24—28.

promoted by *importunity*!" Astonishing! And did not our Saviour himself think so? Has he not given us examples of the good effects of it? The importunate widow is immediately to the point;* so also is the case of the man who went to borrow loaves of his friend.† It was because of *importunity*," that both prevailed; an importunity actually recommended by our Lord, whenever we approach the Father of the spirits of all flesh. If we were to judge of Mr. W's attention to his Bible, by the number of passages which adorn his work, or by the accordance of his doctrines with Scripture, we should be led to conclude that he is not too frequent in its perusal. It is not a little remarkable, however, that it never came to his turn, according to the order of the *Lessons*, to read these two accounts in public, the one on the 28th of February, and the other on the 7th of March; or, if his curate has read them, that he should be such "a forgetful hearer."—"They falsely expect" too, "that the attainment of their end will be best promoted by *repetition*!" I feel a delicacy, Sir, in noticing this subject, lest I should be thought to speak irreverently of a book which, I am sorry to observe, I once lightly esteemed, but which, after more mature thought, I must say, *I now venerate*—I mean the BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER used by the CHURCH OF ENGLAND: the subject is therefore adverted to, not with a view to shew the impropriety of the repeated petitions in the Litany, when *employed by suitable characters*—persons who *feel* them, but to shew how far Mr. W. has forgotten himself when he charges the Methonists with using *repetitions*. Does he not "expect," I do not say *falsely*, but truly, "that the attainment of" the "end will be best promoted by *repetition*," in the use of the Litany? I shall satisfy myself with the bare reference at present.

Singularly inconsistent, Mr. W. after disclaiming any visible interference of Providence in behalf of the righteous,‡ encourages a change of prayer, adapting our prayers to "the

* Luke xviii. 1—7.

† Luke xi. 5—13.

‡ P. 65, 68, 69.

occurrence of events affecting our welfare."* Prayer, in such case, must be unnecessary, if no visible distinction be made. Any how, in point of effect, one prayer will be as good as another.

I am sorry, Sir, I have again to apologize for enlarging so much. It was not what I at first intended. In my next I shall rather *endeavour*, than *promise*, to be brief.

Your's, in much love,

Hull.

JAMES EVERETT.

LETTER IV.

"Men who cannot deceive others, are very often successful in deceiving themselves; they weave their sophistry till their own reason is entangled, and repeat their positions till they are credited by themselves; by often contending, they become sincere in the cause; and by long wishing for demonstrative arguments, they at last bring themselves to fancy that they have found them."

RAMBLER.

"Corrupted manners I shall ne'r defend;
Nor, falsely witty, for my faults contend."

OWID, translated by ELPHINSTONE.

REV SIR,

It will generally be found, that a sect, in proportion as its leading characters are wise and virtuous, rises in respectability. That Methodism, therefore, should be held in such sovereign contempt by Mr. W. is not at all surprising, when we connect with the subject his views of the talents, the learning, and the piety of the preachers. They are characterized as *self-elected*—*unauthorized*—*illiterate*—without *knowledge*—mere *empirics*—*coarse*—*vociferous*—*declamatory*—*perversers* and *corrupters* of the sciences—*foolish*—*arrogant*—*bewildered*—*artful*—*intrusively active*, and as *duping* and *deluding* the people.† Could the Rev. Gentleman have

* Page 150.

† P. 48, 134, 135, 133, 132, 142, 126, 128, 168, 193, 198.

added to his list the sins and follies of drunkenness, swearing, lying, Sabbath-breaking, horse-racing, cock-fighting, fox-hunting, gaming, and making merchandise of livings, he would unquestionably have done it: but, for these he has to look to another quarter. I shall omit at present, Sir, whatever involves a dereliction of moral principle and moral duty; because these are subjects into which the Methodist Conference will, upon Mr. W. preferring the charges, fully enter. What I more immediately wish to direct your attention to, out of this long head-roll, is, the qualifications the Preachers possess for the sacred office they sustain.

Mr. W. considers the Clergy of the Established Church as the only regular spiritual physicians, to whose care the people ought to be entrusted.* In this honour he will participate; as you, Sir, must be content with a part of the odium which he throws upon those whom, in the humility of his spirit, he looks down upon as a set of mere theological quacks. From Dr. Johnson's testimony, as adduced in the first letter, it is a fact, that these regular spiritual physicians, whatever may be their natural or acquired endowments, have been unequal to the task of curing the moral disease of the people; and it is partly acknowledged by Mr. W. himself, that the Methodist Preachers, with all their quackery, have restored the "*poorer classes*" to a state of spiritual health,—have "produced a reform in the external conduct of many they address, and contributed to subdue their barbarism and excesses into comparative self-command and decency of deportment." This is generous; but there is something implied, which, to a medical man, must appear very ridiculous. *All are infected with sin*, and, for all, there is but *one remedy*: but Mr. W. seems to think, that the *same medicine*, which is to be administered for the *same complaint*, and to the *same constitution*—to one constitutionally bad, will produce in the *poor*, by means of Methodist Preachers, what it will not effect in the *rich*. The principal difference is in the

pocket, both as it regards the physician and the patient; and really, Sir, if a quack, in an honest way, can effect a greater cure than Doctor Z. or Sir Humphrey X. I cannot perceive why his want of a *title* should be detrimental to his practice. *Nature* is frequently more lavish of her gifts than *Art*; and if an individual be gifted by Nature for any particular work, it would scarcely be prudent in *Art* to strut about, and find fault, because she did not come in for a due portion of the glory. I recollect, Sir, observing to you once,* that the cobbler at his stall, who, amidst a thousand disadvantages, has acquired a knowledge of the Bible in the languages in which it was first written, is perhaps as exalted a character, and possesses as much real merit, as some who are bedaubed with Roman capitals from head to foot—as some who are decorated with all the initials of deplomatic and academical honour. From this, notwithstanding anything Mr. W. has advanced, I have seen no reason to deviate.

Never was Mr. W. under a greater mistake than when he supposed that the Methodists plead for ignorance, and pour contempt upon learning.† The state of the case is this:—They consider extensive literary accomplishments, not, with Mr. W., as “*essential*,” or absolutely necessary,‡ but as highly *useful*. With this exception, the Methodist Preachers, as a body, have no objection to unite with him in his eulogium on learning, and to applaud many of his remarks on the subject, which compose the best part of his book;§ I say many, for he is led astray in some, by proceeding on the principle—that learning is *every thing*; and his premises being such, it is no wonder that his conclusions should be erroneous. *Learning* and *eloquence* have maintained the *outworks* of Christianity; but simplicity and truth have preserved the *citadel*. It is to Dr. Paley, and others, that the Methodists leave the *outworks*, and to the *outworks* alone do the most of Mr. W.’s qualifications extend||. The Methodists would even hesitate implicitly to

* Meth. Mag. 1815, p. 662.

† P. 135.

‡ P. 137.

§ P. 135—140.

|| P. 138.

trust the *whole* of the *internal evidences* of Christianity to Soame Jenyns, admirably as he has written upon them.* Notwithstanding all that has been accomplished by the most eminent men, both in and out of the Establishment; notwithstanding the philosophic deist has been driven off the field,—sinners are yet to be converted to God.† If the writings of different men on the external evidences of Christianity could effect this, why not read them every Lord's day? or why not preach sermons on the same plan? To the people, such sermons would be deemed unnecessary; and, in point of fact, they would be left, as many have been who have read and heard them,—depraved in heart, and immoral in life. With all the boasted learning of the Establishment, many of her congregations are unconverted, and many of her places of worship are nearly empty, except when an evangelical clergyman is the occasional instrument of filling them, who, in that case, by warming the church, supersedes the necessity of a *stove*. You are probably acquainted, Sir, with an interesting anecdote respecting Dr. Doddridge, who, it is possible, may be commended as a man of learning even by Mr. W. It was the frequent practice of the Doctor, while writing his *Expositor*, to go to a *pious*, but *illiterate* old member of his church, to ask, when he was in doubt respecting any *experimental truth*, its meaning. From this venerable experimental interpreter, the Doctor received many an useful hint, of which the Christian world now enjoys the benefit. The Doctor had a *critical knowledge* of the Bible,—the principal thing for which Mr. W. contends; nor was he a novice, as his "Rise and Progress of Religion" proves, in the work of God upon the heart. But he knew, that he could obtain from his unlettered hearer, what he was ignorant of himself; and, while

* Among other things, Mr. Jenyns represents *faith* as possessing *moral merit*, because of its being a *voluntary act*, p. 60. Eating is a *voluntary act*. Query, Is there any merit in eating?

† To you, Sir, I may safely employ the term "*converted*." Had I been addressing Mr. W. I should have adopted a term less objectionable, and with which he was better acquainted.

this act stands as an imperishable monument of the Doctor's wisdom and humanity. It will remain as a triumph of unlettered piety over learning. Were Mr. W. to adopt the same plan, I should not be surprised to hear of his obtaining a little light on some text of Scripture from an illiterate Methodist.

Some advantage, in the judgment of Mr. W., is gained over the Methodists, from a memoir published in the Methodist Magazine: from whence he draws an inference in support of their contempt of learning. The person who wrote the biographical sketch, knowing that I was engaged in some remarks upon Mr. W.'s work, sent me the following unadorned letter.

"DEAR SIR,

"You are aware that, in man, there is a strong propensity to *misapprehend*, as well as to oppose the views of others. Mr. Wesley had very often to remind his numerous opponents to "quote fairly," whenever they did quote from his writings. In like manner, I have to complain of the conduct of the Rev. L. Wainwright, who has purposely omitted a whole sentence quite in the course of a paragraph, which he has thought proper to transcribe from my Memoir of Thomas Livingstone, published in your Magazine for January, 1817. The neglected sentence is as follows: "So respectable are the British Classics, and so numerous are our Bible Commentaries, that it is not absolutely necessary to understand Greek or Latin, in order rightly to divide the word of truth, or preach with acceptance to an English audience." I suppose it did not accord with Mr. W.'s purpose, of representing the Methodists as enemies to literature, to omit this sentence from his book, as it affixes a precise meaning to my expressions respecting the learning of our young ministers. That man must be a shallow politician who knows not how to distinguish between what is good and what is necessary: seeing there are many things *very good*, but which, for certain persons or purposes, are *wholly unnecessary*. Had Mr. W. been so candid as to

insert the whole of the section, he would have been convicted of neglecting the caution given by the writer, viz. "Let not the casual reader of this paragraph hastily conclude, that it is a very easy matter to obtain admission into the Methodist ministry, or that little honour is reflected upon that man, who is able to pass his examination satisfactorily. Probably it will be found upon inquiry, that the Methodists are very scrupulous in this matter, and would reject those whom almost any other denomination of Christians would receive."—Thus, Sir, have I pointed out one instance of unfairness, on the part of this Rev. Observer. How many others there may be, I cannot determine. No doubt, this *one* has hitherto escaped public notice. Indeed, it was not likely to be detected by any person but myself, unless they had carefully adverted to, and examined, the memoir. I consider it unnecessary to examine the work more minutely, as you are engaged with it, and this single instance will be sufficient to place the readers on their guard,

"I remain, your's respectfully,

"Hull, Jan. 7, 1819.

W. B. PLUMMER."

This letter, Sir, was the more acceptable, not only because it spared me the labour of more minutely examining the passage, but because it removed an unpleasant impression from my mind, which the bare perusal of it, as it stands in Mr. W.'s work, had produced: for, as it *there* stands, there is but too much ground for censure. The objection is now removed, and with but very little credit to Mr. W.

That the Methodist Preachers should be some centuries behind Mr. W. and his clerical brethren, in point of learning, may, if Mr. W. himself be correct, be easily accounted for;—for *reading* is nearly prohibited. "Thus one of the proofs required from the Wesleyan, that he is earnestly desirous of salvation, is to avoid 'Reading those books which do not tend to the knowledge and love of God.' The purport of this injunction is not merely to proscribe those pernicious publications too common in every country in Europe,

nent to the time of his death—his own *Works* 16 vols.—*Notes on the Old and New Testament Library* in 50 vols.—*Hymns—Music—of Moral and Sacred Poems*—together with *tracts on Electricity, Physic, &c.* These were for the benefit of the world, and especially for it under his immediate care. They at least were a promoter of *general knowledge*, and both his *Preachers* and his *People* to indulge in to give themselves *latitude*, in reading. The *Tracts*, is alone intended “to proscribe *those perceptions* too common in Europe,” and not “to the *discouragement* of all those *literary pursuits*, especially connected with sacred subjects.” A rule of conduct attended to, might be of service to some of order. At a period when I was rather inexperienced in the divine life, I recollect being not a little shocked by the conduct of a clergyman on a particular occasion, whose favourite amusement was that he entered a bookseller’s shop in Derby where he bought up all the dash of a gentleman of the turf, or a *Novel*, entituled, “*The Irish Girl*.” He

by which the truth of revelation is attempted to be undermined, and its doctrines held up to ridicule and contempt; but, indefinitely expressed as it now stands, this rule must be intended to operate to the discouragement of all those literary pursuits, not immediately connected with sacred subjects."* Supposing the rule to be *indefinite*, the *practice* of Mr. Wesley, and the *attainments* of many of his preachers, will affix to it a determinate meaning. On the latter, I forbear enlarging; with regard to Mr. Wesley, a few words may be necessary. He introduced the *Classics* into his school—made extracts from some of the Classic Authors, under the titles of *Excerpta ex Virgilio, Ovidio, &c.*—published *Grammars—Logic—Histories*—a Compendium of *Natural Philosophy* in 5 vols.—the *Methodist Magazine* from its commencement to the time of his death—his own *Works* comprised in 16 vols.—*Notes on the Old and New Testament*—the *Christian Library* in 50 vols.—*Hymns—Music*—a Collection of *Moral and Sacred Poems*—together with various *Extracts on Electricity, Physic, &c.* These were all published for the benefit of the world, and especially for that part of it under his immediate care. They at least prove, that he was a promoter of *general knowledge*, and that he wished both his *Preachers* and his *People* to indulge in *variety*, and to give themselves *latitude*, in reading. The rule, therefore, is alone intended "to proscribe *those pernicious publications* too common in Europe," and not "to operate to the *discouragement* of all those *literary pursuits*, not immediately connected with sacred subjects." A rule of this nature, if attended to, might be of service to some of the clerical order. At a period when I was rather inexperienced in the divine life, I recollect being not a little affected with the conduct of a clergyman on a particular occasion,—a clergyman, whose favourite amusement was that of hunting. He entered a bookseller's shop in Derby where I then was, with all the dash of a gentleman of the turf, and inquired for a *Novel*, entitled, "*The Irish Girl.*" He

* Page 159, 160.

intimated at the same time, that he had "*Saurin's Sermons*," of which he wished to dispose, and which I purchased. I could not help concluding, that it was a singular exchange for the library of a *clergyman*, and that *Saurin* would have been as advantageous to him as *the Irish Girl*. To all such persons the above rule is seriously recommended.

But, Sir, admitting reading not to be actually prohibited, yet the very system of *itinerancy* is deemed inimical to improvement.* It must be confessed, that travelling throws many obstacles in the way of acquiring knowledge; but still to a person of studious habits, these obstacles may be surmounted. They are not too numerous to prevent a man from being in his study, from *six* to *eight hours* a day, on an average—to prevent him from becoming a *workman* that *needeth not to be ashamed*—or to prevent *extensive usefulness*. Any how, the Methodist Preachers have as much time for improvement as the *habits*, the *employment*, and *advice* of some of the *clergy* will admit of. Are there no clergymen, who come under the character of *Loungers*, so strikingly portrayed in the *Spectator*? Are there not others engaged in instructing children to *read, write, &c. six days* out of *seven*? Are there not others again, employed in their *farms* the greater part of the week? The last employment is justified from the pulpit. In "A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Deaneries of Richmond and Catterick, within the Diocese of Chester, on Thursday, July 4, 1816, by John Headlam, A. M. Rector of Wycliffe, and Deputy Commissary of the Archdeaconry of Richmond," *agricultural pursuits* are highly recommended. It is impossible for me to say, what interest such an address would excite among the Rector's reverend auditors, or how many hours it would be the means of lopping off from their studies and preparations for the pulpit. Nor is it my intention to determine, how far the pursuits of *agriculture* will fit a *divine* for *extensive usefulness* in the *vineyard* of the Lord; or how truly *ecclesiastical* it would appear, to see an *apostle* of JESUS CHRIST—

a venerable minister, walking up to his cattle with a ruddy complexioned butcher, and sticking his philosophic thumbs into the sides of a fat bullock, then striking the bargain. It is only when *itinerancy* is wounded through the left side, that I wish to appear in its defence. Had St. Paul delivered a charge to his brethren in the ministry, he would have found a more suitable subject; and any other religious body in the land would have blushed for the adviser. It may indeed be objected, that the impediment in the acquisition of useful knowledge, in regard to Methodism, is in the *system*; whereas, in the Establishment, it rests solely with *individuals*, who take upon themselves the responsibility for what they do or advise. But what, Sir, has become of the *discipline* of that church that will admit of such things? Besides, to me, it is no way satisfactory, that the defect is not in the system. What is it but a radical defect in the system, that permits a poor curate with a large family, to live but a few degrees from starvation, while the person who employs him, and does scarcely any of the work, is permitted to fatten on the profits? It is stern necessity only that compels some of the clergy to teach children their *letters*, while they should be *preparing food* for the *flock of Christ*. Such of the clergy as are engaged in agricultural pursuits, may be very properly classed with the Methodist *Local Preachers*, who, as Mr. W. observes, "are not expected to relinquish the particular trade, or other secular employment, which they usually follow."* One advantage which the Local Preachers have over them, as it regards noble-mindedness, is, that their labours are *gratuitous*; they make their *trade* support them; they do not devote the *people's time* to their *own private ends*. The *Itinerant Preachers*, who have given themselves entirely to the work of the sacred ministry, study to shew themselves approved; and proceed under a conviction, that the speediest and best way to *evangelize the world* is, to promote *itinerancy*.

* Page 109.

Another objection against itinerancy is, its hostility to *union*, or "cordiality," between preacher and people.* Itinerancy certainly labours under this inconvenience; and it is not a little pleasing to flesh and blood to be snugly settled on a *good living* for life. But no system is without its disadvantages. What union, for instance, can a clergyman have with his flock, who knows not his *poor members*—who is *seldom* on his *living*—who *lives* several miles from his church? And as it respects a *change* of *ministry*, fostering a hostile disposition, where the people "look forward with pleasure to the speedy departure" of a preacher who may have excited their ire,† it will apply to any body of people among whom a change is *possible*. How natural would it be for a whole parish to look forward with joy to the removal of a clergyman, who has kindled it to a flame with *law-suits* respecting *tithes*? In this particular, itinerancy has the advantage over the church; for, in Methodism, the people look forward with a *hope* which shall not be cut off, for a change; in the Establishment, a clergyman is frequently entailed upon a people for *life*—for *better* and for *worse*, and that, not by themselves, but by *others*: and if "hope deferred maketh the heart sick," how incurable, in such a case, must be the *sickness* of the parishioners? I do not wish, Sir, to substitute *retort* for *argument*; but when the one is unnecessary, I am sometimes in the habit of resorting to the other, as the most effectual method of stopping the mouths of gainsayers.

A still more serious charge against the itinerant system is, "The neglect to which the family of the preachers must be unavoidably subjected, by their perpetual change of circuits."‡ This "*neglect*," Mr. W. ought to know, can only occur about *one week* in the *year*, which, in a general way, will be sufficient to remove a family, where one furnished house is left for another; and this "*perpetual change of circuits*," never takes place above *once* in *twelve months*,

* Page 113.

† Page 114.

‡ Page 114.

generally only in *two years*, and, occasionally, not before the expiration of *three*. During the removal, the children are under the care of their parents, where as much attention is paid to their principles and morals, as when on the circuit. No sooner are they fixed, than, from the generally contracted state of the circuits, the father spends the greater part of his time at *home*, while the *mother* is stationary. *Schools* are provided for the *boys* at a certain age; who are permitted to see their parents nearly as often as a clergyman's son is allowed the same privilege when at the *Boarding-School*, or at *College*. The *girls* are always at *home*, which is more than can be said of the daughters of many of the clergy, who are only permitted to visit their parents during the vacation from school.

Mr. W. endeavours to meet an argument of Mr. Wesley's in favour of itinerancy, viz. That no one man, whom he ever knew, had all the talents which were needful for beginning, continuing, and perfecting the work of grace in one congregation.* And how does he combat it? Chiefly by stating, that the churches which had stationed ministers, must, prior to the introduction of Methodism, have been in a pitiable condition. This cannot be denied; nor can it be successfully contradicted, that many churches in the present day are equally to be pitied. Where the clergyman has little else but his gown and bands to recommend him, the churches are as thin as the people are ill-instructed. Even among the evangelical clergy, we do not always find crowded congregations: and how few of them, for any number of years, have been able to maintain the same popularity with which they commenced? The salvation of the world depends as much upon our *increasing* as our *preserving* a congregation: and as "Man," according to a heathen writer, "is an animal fond of novelty," a proper variety is as necessary in the *persons* who teach, as in the *subjects* discussed, in order to excite attention.—But it whets *curiosity*! Granted. Is it not a fact, that thousands, who have no

* Page 116, 117.

inclination to attend a place of worship, and who never once go to hear either a pious clergyman or dissenting minister, settled in their own town or neighbourhood, are, through curiosity, induced to hear the word of God preached by a *stranger*? And is there any harm in accommodating a public ministry to the natural backwardness of man to divine things? Would Mr. Wainwright himself object to a sinner being saved in this way? If, by itinerancy, God were dishonoured—the truth sacrificed—and sinners never saved; if it were unsupported by heaven, and had not the example of Christ and the apostles to recommend it, then might Mr. W. take up arms, and proceed to war. He would gladly persuade his readers, that the example of the apostles can be no warrant for the conduct of the Methodists.* When he directs to more correct human models, and supports what he advances by Scripture, the Methodists, I have no doubt, will relinquish their present plan.

But were the system even favourable to learning, to cordiality, and to the discharge of domestic duties, still the preachers are *unauthorized* and *self-appointed*. They are, it is true, destitute of one mark of a call, which Mr. W. requires of them, viz. *miracles*. "The disciples of Wesley are equally confident and persevering in alleging that they are divinely commissioned to preach the gospel, and to dissipate the remains of error and corruption:—but what supernatural works have they adduced to prove the truth of their assertions? Do they assume to have instantaneously healed the maladies of the body, without the intervention of human means, or to have restored, by the utterance of a command, the disordered mind to the use of its unclouded faculties?"† The preachers are here represented as maintaining a "*divine commission*" to preach the gospel; they are required to perform "*supernatural works*," as a proof of the truth of their assertions; but "to these demonstrations of a divine origin," Mr. W. adds, "they make no preten-

* Page 118—121.

† Page 186.

sions;" consequently—for this is the most natural inference, they are uncommissioned by heaven. Mr. W. and all his brethren, profess before the bishop to be "*divinely commissioned to preach the gospel*," when they declare that they are moved by the *Holy Ghost* to take upon them the priest's office. "But what supernatural works have they adduced to prove the truth of their" professions? If Mr. W. were to be brought to this test, I am afraid he would no longer be able to sign himself "Rector of Great Brickhill, in the county of Bucks;" and were this test to become general, it is to be feared, that most of the established pulpits would be without ministers.

To shew how well Mr. W. has studied his subject, he informs his readers, that the *Superintendent* is chosen to his office in the *Circuit*, that there are *District Quarterly Meetings*, and that *Local Preachers* are always *Class Leaders*.*

The subject of *extempore preaching* is very slightly censured.† *Reading*, however, is considered as most proper for the clergy; a consideration which will meet with general suffrage, if public meetings, where we occasionally have specimens of their extemporaneous powers, are to decide. And yet few are more severe in their censures upon public speakers than some of the clergy. I recollect an instance which occurred not a thousand miles from the place where I now write, when a clergyman made an invidious attack on the *rhetoric* of a Methodist Preacher who had just preceded him in a public meeting. And yet this gentleman employed some of the coarsest figures, confounded the plural with the singular, and delivered sentences, the construction of which would have disgraced a man who had never been taught to read. Few, indeed, of the clergy, are fit for extempore speaking. This Mr. W. is fully aware of, and endeavours to account for it in a way perfectly in character with himself. He illustrates and defends it, by the small number of *speakers* in the House of Commons;‡

* Page 108, 109.

† Page 151—154.

‡ Page 153.

and this is the principal reason why I notice his remarks on this subject; because he here confounds men who ought to be *called*, and if called, *qualified* of God, and men who are *called* by the PEOPLE. In the last instance, the only *qualification* which a member can receive from his constituents is, a *vote*, which renders him *eligible* to *sit* in the *House*; but in the first, as *preaching*, or *speaking*, is a principal part of a minister's work, we naturally suppose that those whom God *elects* to that office, will be qualified to deliver his *message* to the people—and to deliver it without the intervention of pen, ink, and paper. While *extempore prayer* is condemned as "unconnected jargon," and denied as having a tendency to promote devotion,* the *Liturgy* is warmly recommended. That "unconnected jargon" has distinguished many an extempore prayer, will be admitted; but that this is a characteristic of the prayers generally offered up in Methodist chapels by Methodist Preachers, Mr. W. is called upon to prove; and he is also requested to make it appear, that there is *less* of a *devotional spirit* in those places of worship where only *extempore prayer* is used, than in the Establishment where the *Liturgy* only is read. It is not for me to separate *devotion* from the *Liturgy*. Many a devout mind has been aided by it; and I can tell Mr. W. where he will meet with a better defence of the *Liturgy*, and more cogent reasons for its use, than appears in his work.†

From such a set of illiterate vagrants as are the Methodist Preachers, neglecting both the culture of their minds and of their families, what, Sir, can be expected but a *system* the most puerile and confused, and *manners* the most rude and incorrect?

You will not be astonished to hear, Sir, that the *discipline* of the Methodists should have excited the ire of Mr. W. to a considerable extent; but to hear him, by way of forming a contrast, applaud the discipline of the Establishment,‡ may

* Page 147, 148. † Recovery of Dissenters, vol. ii. p. 97—263. ‡ P. 195.

perhaps excite your risible powers. As it respects the discipline of the Church of England, I am really at a loss to know where to find it. Where is the sinner expelled from her communion? Are not drunkards and swearers permitted to officiate as *ministers, clerks, sextons, church-wardens, overseers, &c.* all of whom are deemed members? Yet Mr. W. fearlessly affirms, that she is *conformed* to the *Apostolic Church*;^{*} and that in those particulars where a *conformity* is *wanting*, they are properly an *improvement* of the *Apostolic plan*; seeing “that institutions suited to one age, may be very ill adapted to the exigencies of another; and that what may be, in the highest degree, efficacious in the infancy of a religion, may become useless, and even preposterous, when that religion has acquired maturity and strength.”[†] Is the act of preserving profligate sinners within the pale of any church, an *improvement* of the Apostolic plan? It was a part of the plan of the Apostles to expel an improper member—to exhort their followers to *separate* themselves from sinners—and, on some occasions, to prohibit them from taking a social meal with the wicked: “I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”[‡] If Mr. W. can see no evil in after ages improving on the Apostolic plan, there can be surely no harm in the Methodists attempting the improvement of—say the Christian ministry, by *itinerancy*, which former ages had entirely *localized*. They are no more censurable for improving on the Establishment, than the Establishment for improving on the Church of Rome. In short, to use the language of Mr. W., with the exception of any attempt to improve on the plan of the Apostles—of being wise above what is written, the Methodists have found, “that institutions suited to one age, may be very ill adapted to the exigencies of another.” Having seen very little good effected by the

* P. 195—196.

† P. 187.

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 17; 1 Cor. v. 11.

discipline exercised in the Establishment—by its vast improvement, they have thought proper to return to first principles and practices—to the mode of discipline adopted in the first ages of Christianity. I dwell the more on the discipline of the Establishment as it regards the *admission, expulsion, and rule over members*, because Mr. W. considers it so admirably adapted for *promoting the salvation* of moral and accountable creatures," and as "*amply furnished with every requisite for accomplishing all the essential purposes of a Christian Church.*"*—When he speaks of Methodist *discipline* being framed for the purpose of proselyting the multitude, and of captivating popular favour,† it is evident that he knows not what he affirms. Not any thing can be conceived more extravagant. Prohibiting, as it does, all actual transgression, it is opposed to the *habits* of the *multitude*; and, instead of captivating *popular favour*, it has met with the most *violent opposition*. Even Mr. W. himself, on the popular side of the question, has attacked it with all the virulence of which he is capable. The insinuation that *vehemence* and *artifice* are employed,‡ is too gross to be credited by persons possessing the smallest knowledge of the Methodists. Men are *free* both to enter and leave Society. The rules by which they are bound to walk, are published in the face of day, and with few exceptions, (which exceptions are chiefly through negligence on the part of the leader,) put into the hands of all who unite with the body.

It was not likely that Mr. W. in writing on Methodism, would omit to notice Class and Band Meetings, Watch-Nights, and Love-Feasts. My remarks on these shall be short, and more with a view to *correct* some mistaken notions concerning them, than fully to enter into their *defence*. They have been defended in a way which Mr. W. will never be able to refute. One of the duties of a *Class-Leader* is not, as stated by Mr. W. "to receive the contributions which may be advanced either for the benefit of the poor, or for what they

* Page 196.

† Page 93—94.

‡ Page 94.

boldly term the support of the gospel,"* but to receive such monies as may be advanced for the sole support of the *Preachers*, who publish the truth of God. The *poor money* is collected in the Love-Feasts, and on Sacramental occasions; and it is not a little the Methodists contribute in this way, over and above what they pay as *poor-rates*, and contribute to various charitable institutions. The *weekly contributions* are the *free-will* offerings of the people for the maintenance of their ministers, and which the clergy receive in the way of *tithes*, both from *Churchmen* and *Dissenters*,—but whether *voluntary* or *involuntary*, the *law* and the *dispositions* of the people will be best able to explain. *Band-Meetings* are not, as supposed, for the purpose of disclosing "*hidden facts*" and "*criminal deeds*;"† they are intended to promote *christian* fellowship, and secure the blessings of heaven. As in other cases, Mr. W. assumes it as a thing of course, that *christians* are subject to "*follies* and *criminal conduct*."‡ Whatever may be the *character* of the people with whom he is acquainted, and with whom he associates, the *Rules* of the Methodists *exclude* all those against whom "*criminal conduct*" is proved. The passage upon which he concludes *Band-Meetings* to be founded,—"*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed*,"§ he endeavours to get rid of, by declaring it "*only applicable to the primitive christians*."|| I have repeatedly had to notice this, as Mr. W.'s method of surmounting a difficulty. When he cannot deny the *precedent*, or the *early* existence of such *practices*, he very deliberately turns them over to other times. It is a very convenient substitution for argument; and whatever it may be of *credit*, is a salvation of *time*. But are not the same important *ends* to be answered now, in every important christian institution of God, as formerly? Human nature seems to be so changed—so completely metamorphosed, that, according to the new light of Mr. W., it ought to be treated quite in a different

* Page 96.

† Page 97, 98.

‡ Page 101.

§ James v. 16.

|| Page 99.

way from that in which it was treated in "older times," and ought to have institutions adapted to that treatment. If the text of Scripture just quoted, be exclusive in its application to apostolic times, by what text, except his *own*, does he support his *disapproval* of these meetings? Not any is cited. He appears terribly afraid of any thing that would lead to *scrutiny*; and indeed, if little else but *folly, criminal conduct, and hidden facts* are to be disclosed, he must have his reasons for such hostility. On the subject of *Watch-Nights*, he gives some sly hints of criminality between the sexes.* These insinuations never occur without the following words irresistibly forcing themselves upon my mind, "Unto the pure, all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure." Two powerful objections urged against these nocturnal meetings are, that "they abridge the allotted portion of nightly rest—and increase the exhaustion of bodily strength."† Both objections particularly concern the *poor*. But as *Watch-Nights* seldom occur, from Mr. W.'s own statement; consequently, they cannot *abridge* much of their *time*, nor *exhaust* much of their *strength*. It is not at all singular, since he is such a warm advocate for the *theatre* and other *amusements*, that there is not a word of reproof to the *poor*, for spending their nights at the *theatre*—over a *pack of cards*—or for *exhausting* their *bodily* strength till after "the noon of night" in *dancing*, at which places many an improper connection is formed. No, no, these are innocent recreations; and for a little further recreation, Mr. Wyndham, had he been alive, might have brought all his energies to bear upon the propriety and delights of bull-baiting, and other amusements equally cruel and absurd. But to spend a *whole night* in *acts of devotion*, say *once a year*, or *once a quarter*, how wild, and what a waste of time, to a mere man of the world!—a man for whom the religion of Mr. W. is so admirably adapted. "The time," says he, "is occupied

* Page 105.

† Page 104, 105.

without intermission, in prayer, singing, and exhortation; but it is really not easy to conceive what peculiar advantage can arise from the performance of these duties at so unreasonable a part of the four and twenty hours.* All this, Sir, is from a *Clergyman*—a *Rector*—who has the care of souls—and whose place it is to encourage, not to discountenance “duties,” and especially devotional “duties!!” The poor may, with Mr. W.’s permission, devote twelve hours out of the twenty-four to the world and to the body, but not two or three, occasionally, to the soul and to eternity. We have some acquaintance, Sir, with a publication, entitled, “The Citizen of the World.” Mr. W. may very safely and correctly, style the cause which he espouses, “The Religion of the World,” and may entitle his work, “The Religion of the World Defended.”—*Love-Fests* are acknowledged to have occupied a place in the primitive church,† but are not without their abuses, such as engendering *self-importance*, and prompting to a *display of parts*; and these are to weigh against the immense good they have effected: Upon the whole, there is less hostility apparently to these than to the former.

On the subject of *conversation*, Mr. W. rises high. He warmly recommends topics of a *literary* nature.‡ But here again, his grand sin is that of *omission*. Had Jesus Christ and his apostles no other but literary subjects to discuss? Are immortal beings, who know not, that, ere to-morrow’s sun shall have risen upon them, they may have finally abandoned this globe, to spend their social hours in an evening *only* in things of minor importance? Is religion to have no share in our conversation? Certainly, our *moral* and *religious*, is of as prime importance as our *intellectual* improvement.

Though the Methodists are very little indebted to Mr. W. the *dress-makers* and *tailors of fashion* may move him a vote of thanks for his services to their cause. To dress with the

* Page 104.

† Page 106—107.

‡ Page 172.

times, is, in his view, not at all incompatible with Scripture; and yet, perfectly consistent with himself, he omits quoting any. He even encourages a *conformity* to the *habits, customs, modes, and usages* of the age;* and condemns the Methodists for pronouncing things *indifferent* as *criminal*.† Though they condemn a conformity to the world, because God himself condemns it; and though they consider the duty of *self-denial* as forming no part of the system of Mr. W., yet they have sense sufficient to enable them to discriminate between what is *indifferent* and what is *criminal*. It is Mr. W. himself who deals in this whole-sale way. It is the "*custom*" now-a-days for men to nip themselves together in the middle, like an hour-glass, by the assistance of a pair of stays; and for ladies to give the honest Quaker an opportunity of drinking to their "absent handkerchiefs." At a period like the present, *dress* rather requires a check than a stimulus. The writers of the Homilies of the Church of England had to complain on this subject, as well as the Methodists; and it would be well, making some allowance for the style and the times, if Mr. W. were to imitate some of those old-fashioned gentlemen. What would his audience think, if on one Lord's day, he were to read his own remarks on dress, and on the Sabbath-day following such passages as these?—"We are never contented, and therefore we prosper not, so that most commonly he that ruffleth in the stables, in his fine furred gown, corked slippers, trim buskins, and warm mittons, is more ready to chill for cold than the poor labouring man, which can abide in the fields all the day long, when the north wind blows, with a few beggarly clouts about him. We are loth to wear such as our fathers have left us, we think not that sufficient or good enough for us. We must have one gown for the day, another for the night, one long, another short, one for winter, another for summer, one through-furred, another but faced, one for the working-day, another for the holy-day, one of this colour,

* Page. 162.

† Page. 198.

another of that colour, one of cloth, another of silk or damask. We must have change of apparel, one afore dinner, and another after, one of the Spanish fashion, another Turkey: and to be brief, never content with sufficient. —The proud and haughty stomachs of the daughters of England, are so maintained with divers disguised sorts of costly apparel, that as Tertullian, an ancient father, saith, there is left no difference in apparel between an honest matron and a common strumpet. Yea, many men are become so *effeminate*, that they care not what they spend in disguising themselves, ever desiring new toys, and inventing new fashions. Therefore a certain man that would picture every countryman in his accustomed apparel, when he had painted other nations, he pictured the English-man all naked, and gave him cloth under his arm, and bade him make it himself as he thought best, for he changed his fashion so often, that he knew not how to make it. Thus with our phantastical devices, we make ourselves laughing-stocks to other nations, while one spendeth his patrimony upon pounces and cuts, another bestoweth more upon a *dancing* shirt, than might suffice to buy him honest and comely apparel for his whole body. Some hang their revenues about their necks, ruffling in their ruffs, and many a one jeopardeth his best joynt, to maintain himself in sumptuous rayment.* These sentiments are perhaps too *Metho-*
distical for Mr. W.

A person dressed in modern fashion, ought to have company suited to his taste and appearance. Mr. W. is at hand to introduce him to such, among whom he may enjoy himself. "I can scarcely think it possible," says he, "that the lawfulness of social meetings will be seriously disputed, sanctioned as they are by the example of our Saviour himself."† It must be remarked, that in these "social meetings," *cards, music, &c.* are recommended.‡ Now, Sir, I should be glad to know whether Jesus Christ ever "sanc-

* Homily on "Excess of Apparel."

† Page 171.

‡ Page 167, 168.

tioned" *card-parties*? Well, but a social game at cards is *useful*, inasmuch as it prevents *backbiting* and *evil-speaking*. So Mr. W. argues.* But can he prove that it prevents *face-biting*? It is for the members of the Church of England he is pleading; and what does his vindication imply, but that their propensity to backbiting is so great, that they have to fly to cards to prevent its indulgence. A fine compliment for a clergyman to his flock! Pretty logic for a minister of Jesus Christ! Sending his people to the *card-table*, instead of a *throne of grace*, that they may be saved from vice! No wonder that "*trifling*," provided it only be not *systematic*, should be considered allowable.† Yet this *reverend divine*, who justifies the common amusements of the day, as dancing, cards, and theatrical exhibitions,‡ condemns the Methodists for trifling away their "*valuable time*." In what? Strange as it may seem, Sir, in *preaching the gospel*!!!§ Whether is the *practice* of the Methodists, or the *creed* of Mr. W., most justified by that sentence—"REDEEMING THE TIME?"||

The common argument adduced in favour of those amusements by the world is,—that they relieve a dull hour, are an "agreeable relaxation from severer pursuits," help to "dissipate the clouds of melancholy, and augment the pleasurable sensations of life,"¶ Mr. W. fully enters into the spirit of these triflers, and pleads their cause gratis; for it is thus that he argues in their favour. The danger is, of permitting amusements, even such as are not morally bad, to take such firm hold of the mind as to become a *passion*. Allowing that when persons meet together, nothing passes that can derogate from virtue and good morals, yet such parties may be hurtful by consuming too much time, and occasioning the neglect of domestic economy. Pleasure is not the business of our lives; and to be too eager in the pursuit of it, is at the risk of never obtaining the end, or of acquiring that which may ultimately produce sorrow and remorse. Those

* Page 172—173.

† Page 158.

‡ Page 167.

§ Page 185.

¶ Ephes. v. 16.

¶ Page 169, 166.

amusements should be avoided which cannot be enjoyed without injuring our virtue, our reputation, or the peace of the family with which we are connected. This, Sir, is to say the least of them, and to view them in the most favourable light. But we must view them, not in their *negative*, but in their positive character; we must view them in connection with our *responsibility* to God for the *time* we possess—with the *uncertain tenure of human life*—with the *vast work* we have to *accomplish*—and as *helps to piety*. Their *positive character* may be considered as described in Herbert's "*Dotage* ;"

" False glossing pleasures : caeks of happiness :
Foolish night-fires : women's and children's wishes :
Chases, in arras : gilded emptiness :
Shadows, well mounted : dreams in a career :
Embroider'd lies : nothing, between two dishes :—
These are the pleasures here."

For such pleasures as these the Rector of Great Brickhill pleads, in advocating the cause of the Amusements of the day. Nor less descriptive of their *effects*, are the lines which immediately follow ;

" True, earnest sorrows : rooted miseries :
Anguish, in grain : vexations, ripe and blown :
Sure-footed griefs : solid calamities :
Plain demonstrations, evident and clear,
Touching their proofs ev'n from the very bote :—
These are the sorrows here."*

There is a paper of Dr. Clarke's on DANCING, in the Methodist Magazine for 1792, p. 264,—of which I should be happy to see a reprint in one of the numbers for the *present year*. To that paper I would refer Mr. W. ; and when he has answered the objections, and overturned the arguments produced there, I shall freely recommend his work. With regard to THEATRICAL AMUSEMENTS, which only "*ignorant fanatics*," by their "*mischievous scruples*,"

* Poems, page 293.

would wish to banish,* a bare reference might be made to the excellent treatises of *Collier* and *Stiles* on the *immoral tendency* of the stage. When these works are answered, I shall not hesitate to justify what I at present condemn. I had intended fully entering into this subject, but the small stock of patience which you must now have left, confine me to the few following brief remarks on amusements in general.

They have been, and still may be, argued as *inexpedient*, *inapt*, and *unfit*. Would a *penitent* approach the horse-course, the hunting-ground, or the card-table? He cannot, when he sees his soul at stake, and is all dejection and dread, murder his time and dissipate his mind, by shuffling, cutting, and dealing about kings, queens, and *knaves*,—by dancing to a violin,—by diverting his senses at a play-house,—or by following the chase. Take another case. Would it not be sufficient to shock the hardest heart, to see a person *condemned to die* playing at cards on the morning of his execution? Why unbecoming in him *then*, or at *all*, more than in any other person? We are no more certain of life than the criminal. If improper at that period, it must be improper always; for the game itself, the God we profess to serve, and the salvation we profess to seek, maintain the same character. Let us next turn to the *Christian*,—not Mr. W.'s Christian. Those who are filled with the love of God, actually spurn such things from them, as low and grovelling: and for such to ask what harm there can be in playing at cards, &c. would be perfectly as ridiculous as that man would constitute himself, who should ask what harm there could possibly accrue from his dandling a jointed doll, playing with children at chuck-farthing, push-pin, or bob-cherry? He would not consider the *harmlessness* of the thing a sufficient reason for doing it—for trifling away his time in child's-play. The thing itself is unfit. For the *matured* Christian to plead for

them, to say nothing of a *Rector*, as he advances in life, is still more disgraceful; and positively argues, that a thirst for worldly gratifications should increase with piety—a plain contradiction. Can he not find sufficient in Christ, but must go to the world to complete his happiness? We are called to *fellowship* with God. But to play games is something like bringing fire from *heathen* altars, or more properly from hell, to warm the heart with the love of God. The Christian's life too, is a *life of prayer*. But how can he in conscience pray for a blessing either *upon, before, in, or after*, the performance of these things? He is also to *live* in the *Spirit*; from which a spirit of gaming and folly is very different. Nor is even this all. It is a perfect mystery to know what we are to understand by *denying* ourselves, by *taking up our cross*, and by *following Christ*, if a renunciation of such things be not implied. Unless we are to forsake these, the Scriptures are *obscure*. If we can trace Jesus Christ to the gaming-table, to hunting down animals, or footing it at a dance, then—and not till then, will those things be expedient, and we be justified in the use of them as his *followers*. “For even hereunto are we called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps.”* It is possible the ingenuity and accommodating spirit of Mr. W. may apply this passage to the primitive Christians; thus denying them almost every gratification, and indulging the present generation with almost every thing the foolish mind of man has invented.

Equally correct are those who argue upon them as *forbidden*, and consequently *unlawful*. “This I say then,” observes the apostle, “walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”† After this he enumerates a variety of gross vices, and then adds—“*and such like*.” Every thing that rises from the flesh is suited to the nature of the flesh; and all the works of the flesh are forbidden,

* 1 Pet. ii. 21.

† Gal. v. 16.

To follow the *games* of the world is to be *conformed* to it, all which conformity is prohibited.* But waving every other text on this particular, there is one in the epistle to the Colossians which is sufficient to decide the question: "*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do ALL in the NAME of the LORD JESUS, giving THANKS to GOD and the FATHER by him.*"† Here, Sir, I place my foot. If foolish games and amusements, such as those for which Mr. W. pleads, can be commenced, carried on, and ended, in the *name* of *Christ*, and to the *glory* of *God*, let them be pursued to their utmost extent. Their *unlawfulness* appears from hence,—"*Whatsoever is NOT of FAITH is SIN.*"‡ Thus, by the *law* of faith, they are condemned; for they are neither of faith, nor enjoyed in the power of it. St. Peter reminded those to whom he wrote, that it was not lawful to follow those things which had previously engaged their attention; "*As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance.*"

The last view taken of them is, that they are *unedifying*. They may edify in the knowledge of *gaming*, and enable a man to become more than a *master*—a *knave*; but where is the *honour* in being called a *gamester*? where the *edification* to the *Christian* himself? where the *advantage* to *others*? where the *consolation* imparted in an hour of *affliction*, or in the *article* of *death*? They have just as natural a tendency to produce any of these effects, as a nettle has to allay the sting of a fly. Persons who indulge in them may talk like angels, but they will only prove stumbling-blocks to others.—But it is still reiterated,—They are only amusements, recreations, diversions! True, they *amuse*; but it is so as to attract the attention from the one thing needful: they *re-create*, but it is so as to make a professor conformable to this world, and to stimulate him to walk after the course of it: they *divert*, but it is in such a manner as to turn the soul aside from following Christ. Fine diversions

* Rom. xii. 2.

† Chap. iii. 17.

‡ Rom. xiv. 23.

for new creatures! Let every one please his neighbour for his good to edification. In gaming, people *countenance* others, and *please* themselves; and such as join with them, are pleased to their destruction. So far are they from *edifying*, that, as has just been observed, they *stumble*. And yet those who indulge in them will have the effrontery to ask, What harm have we done? Or with Paul, "For why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?"* Such should recollect, that Paul never meant a liberty that was an occasion to the flesh—a liberty contrary to that love which edifieth in the faith—a liberty which wounds others, any more than a liberty to worship the goddess Diana, to cut off a brother's ears, or set the city of Corinth on fire. For he says, "When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak consciences, ye sin against Christ."† How was it that they offended the weak, and sinned against Christ? By sitting at an idol's table. This, though indifferent in itself, gave offence; and hear the pious breathings of Paul, "Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."‡ The apostle found it necessary repeatedly to dwell upon this topic. "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:—Abstain from all appearance of evil:—See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil:—Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things; for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's."§ These texts but ill accord with the system of Mr. W., which proceeds on the supposition, that there is now more liberty—a gospel more accommo-

* 1 Cor. x. 29.

† 1 Cor. viii. 12.

‡ Verse 13.

§ 1 Cor. x. 32, 1 Thess. v. 22, Ephes. v. 15, 16, Phil. iv. 8, 1 Cor. vi. 20.

dating—a Judge less severe. It is of such as Mr. W. and his followers, that Cowper speaks, in his piece on "THE LOVE OF THE WORLD REPROVED;" a perusal of which is recommended.

" Thus says the prophet of the Turk,
Good Mussulman, abstain from pork ;
There is a part in every swine
No friend or follower of mine
May taste, whate'er his inclination,
On pain of excommunication.
Such Mahomet's mysterious charge,
And thus he left the point at large.
Had he the sinful part express'd,
They might with safety eat the rest;
But for one piece they thought it hard
From the whole hog to be debarr'd ;
And set their wit at work [to find
What joint the prophet had in mind.
Much controversy straight arose,
These choose the back, the belly those ;
By some 'tis confidently said
He meant not to forbid the head ;
While others at that doctrine rail,
And piously prefer the tail.
Thus, conscience freed from ev'ry clog,
Mahometans eat up the hog.

" You laugh—'tis well—The tale applied
May make you laugh on t'other side.
Renounce the world—the preacher cries.*
We do—a multitude replies.
While one as innocent regards
A snug and friendly game at cards ;
And one, whatever you may say,
Can see no evil in a play ;
Some love a concert, or a race ;
And others shooting, and the chase.
Revil'd and lov'd, renounc'd and follow'd,
Thus, bit by bit, the world is swallow'd ;
Each thinks his neighbour makes too free,
Yet likes a slice as well as he :
With *sophistry* their sauce they sweeten,
Till quite from tail to snout 'tis eaten."

* Not Mr. W. but a Methodist Preacher.

These remarks, Sir, I shall now close. *One letter* might have been quite sufficient, as an answer to some writers; but when *every part* of Methodism is attacked, *every part* of Methodism must be defended. It is not a paragraph or two that will defend a system so varied and comprehensive. Had Mr. W.'s *principal* objections been omitted, it might have been inferred that they were unanswerable. In opposition, therefore, to my own views and feelings—which are in favour of any thing *short*, I have entered the more fully into the subject, to prevent any false conclusion; and, if possible, a second attack from the reverend gentleman. It is the love of *truth*, not the desire of *fame*, that has emboldened me to take up the pen. My prospects of the latter are far from flattering; and still less so, if the author of the Rambler be correct. “It is indeed,” says he, “the fate of controvertists, even when they contend for philosophical or theological truth, to be soon laid aside and slighted. Either the question is decided, and there is no more place for doubt and opposition, or mankind despair of understanding it; and growing weary of disturbance, content themselves with quiet ignorance, and refuse to be harassed with labours which they have no hope of recompensing with knowledge.” But, Sir, though I have no hope of *permanent fame*, I do not altogether despair of *present effect*;—that effect, whatever it may be, and to whatever extent, I leave with God.

Your's, affectionately and respectfully,

Hull, 1819.

JAMES EVERETT.

FINIS.



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